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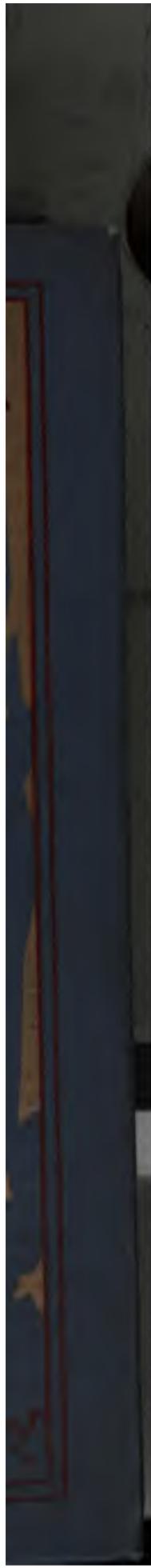
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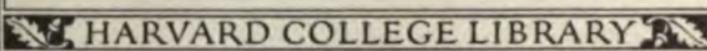
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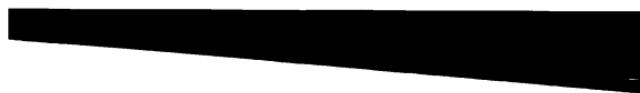


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***IN A TUSCAN GARDEN***

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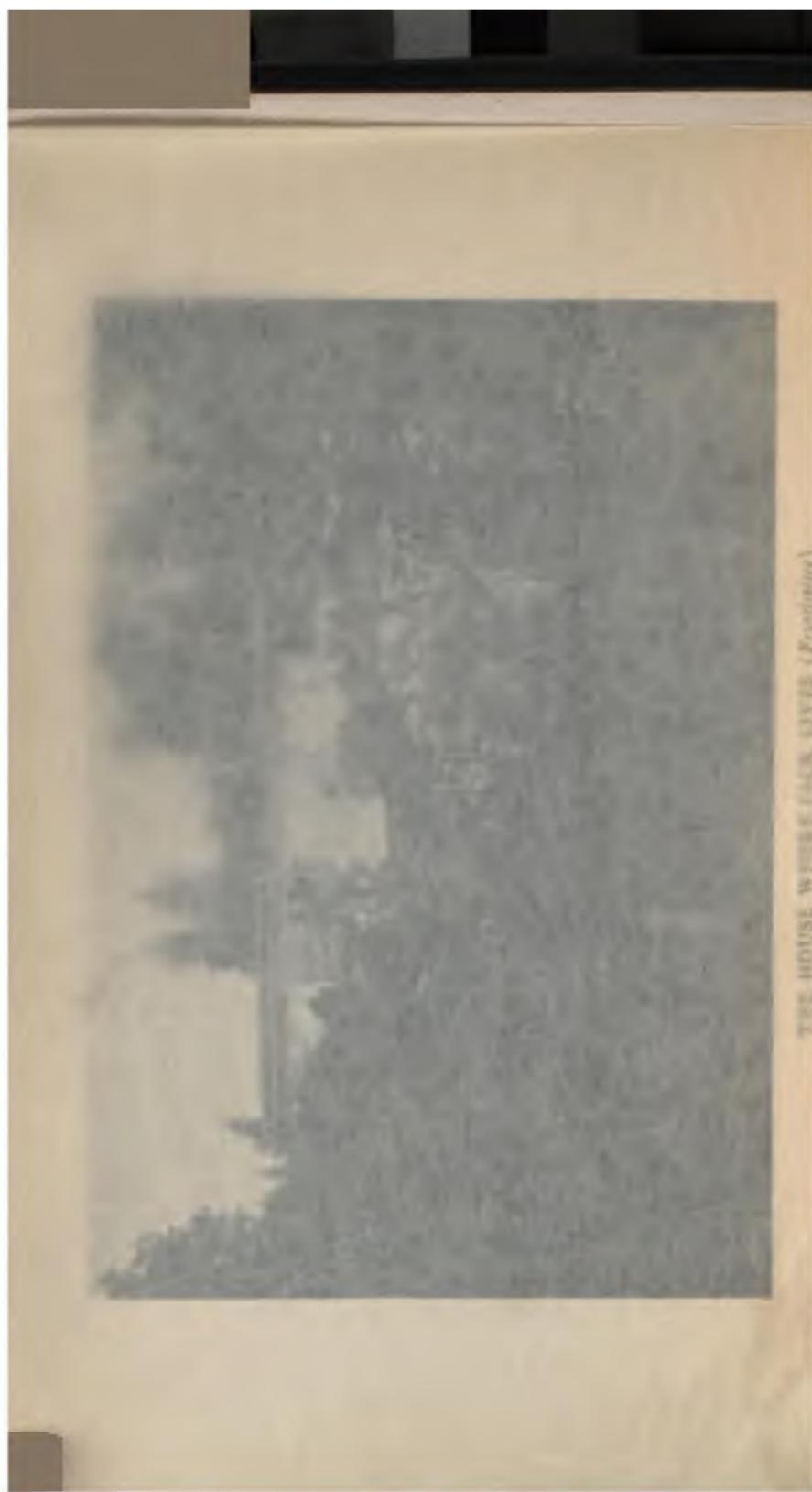
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# *In a Tuscan Garden*

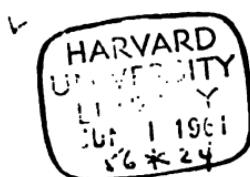


M C M I I

John Lane · The Bodley Head  
L O N D O N and N E W Y O R K



T. H. & T. M. 18



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## PREFACE

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*I have always thought that George Eliot's view of the inutility of prophecy was probably the result of her experience of Tuscan weather during that spring sojourn of which "Romola" was the outcome.*

*It is indeed an unknown quantity,—like the youth of the country, of whom an old gardener once said to me, with a twinkle in his eye, that there was in them a great deal of cattiveria, which had got to come out at one time or another! It is always the unexpected that is happening, and had I been recounting the fortunes of my garden this summer, instead of last year, the chronicle would have been very different. June, indeed, was hot, but in July and August, when London was grilling in tropical heat, here in Tuscany the temperature was perfection,—hardly any close, thundery days, a light breeze playing round, and occasional showers freshening up flowers and foliage, and recalling English greenery at a season when we are inured to drought & vanity & vexation of spirit. Never, in the many years that I have sojourned in the South, have I seen a summer so beautiful as this—now, alas! on the wane—and followed by a Sep-*

## Preface

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tember so wet and stormy as to have seriously damaged what promised to have been the record vintage of the last hundred years.

With all due admiration for the scientific garden culture of which the last twenty years have witnessed so remarkable a development in England, it is a question whether this “boom” in gardening matters is not being pushed too far. We Britons are very apt to overdo the energy we apply to whatever pursuit or pastime is the craze of the moment, and when one hears of the fine distinctions drawn between decorative roses & garden roses & exhibition roses, the thought arises whether all this knowledge is not of the kind that increaseth sorrow, rather than tending to enjoyment pure and simple.

Of the writing and the reading of garden books there is indeed no end, and in mine it will be seen that I can lay no claim to botanical knowledge, and am not even much of a practical gardener, only in fact an out-of-door decorator and colourist. But even ignorant people may achieve something if only, as they say in Scotland, “the root of the matter is in them,” in the love of a garden, and all that belongs to it, deeply implanted in their nature by hereditary instincts.

September, 1901.

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## *IN A TUSCAN GARDEN*







OLD STONE ARCHWAY

## *Chapter I*

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### *The Finding of the Garden*

"Open my heart and you will see  
Graved inside of it Italy,  
Such lovers old are I and she,  
So it always was, so shall ever be."

*Robert Browning*

IN the far-off years of the sixties, when the Italy fever took me very badly, so badly indeed, that I have never succeeded in quite shaking it off, I would have echoed unreservedly those lines of Browning's. In those days poetry was much to the fore, and the joy of all that was opposed to the conventional British type was great.

But, as the years go by, cameras get shifted, and perspectives alter considerably, and I have to confess that every year passed out of England finds me more hopelessly British.

A long residence in Italy gives an intimate knowledge of her people, her standards, and her *morale* generally, under the influence of which the poetry becomes less prominent, and what may be called the seamy side is apt to come painfully to the front.

But in spite of all, to those who have once yielded to its charm, it ever remains the enchanted land. Browning, indeed, in his later years broke the chains of the sorceress, and took up the duties of good English citizenship; but that was after he had sounded the depths of his popularity with his own countrymen, whom he once grimly addressed as "ye who

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love me not." To him might be applied the antithesis of old Pio Nono's verdict on a certain diplomat—"that if not a good Catholic, he was a worse Protestant," for Browning, if a good Italian, was certainly a better Englishman.

The Englishman who lives in Italy to-day might do worse than bear in mind the just proportions of the relative values of patriotism.

I once heard a man say reflectively, "Think of living in Italy, when you might have it to go to." He expressed a great truth, for it is certain that wherever we do not live, there we best find our holiday.

It is not easy in any country to discover the ideal residence that suits all one's requirements—situation and rent included. In Italy, if you are looking for a town habitation, you may find what you want with perhaps greater ease than in any other country. But the moment you go beyond town walls and boundaries your difficulties begin.

Old Italian villas, about which so much has been written, and to the idea of which so much romance clings, are, as a matter of fact, for the most part, gaunt, barren, hideous structures outside, and conspicuous for every kind of inconvenience within. You never see a creeper of any kind planted against their walls to soften their staring outline, and they have a desolate, forlorn look, in strong contrast to our own lovely English houses. For the most part, they are let in separate floors to different tenants; those who occupy the ground floor have the right of access to the garden, but no further interest in it, as it invariably remains the property of

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the proprietor. Some years ago, when the late King of Würtemburg rented the beautiful old villa of Quarto, near Florence, he was greatly surprised at finding he had to pay the gardener for every bunch of violets gathered.

This arrangement of letting in flats has, for its practical result, that, if the various residents manage to avoid quarrelling with each other on vexed questions of entrance-stairs and water-rights, their domestics will infallibly do it for them. We were, therefore, extremely anxious to find what is rarely to be met with, except in the wilds of the country, viz., a small house with a piece of garden attached to it, of which we should have entire and sole control.

We had seen such a place in a quite ideal situation in the neighbourhood of Carrara. It lay in a sheltered corner on grass terraces, just beneath an old convent, shut in behind by snow-peaks and with the sea in full view about two miles distant. The climate in this part of Italy is delightful, never very hot in summer, and mild enough in winter for lemon-trees to stand out without protection.

This place had been occupied for some years by an English family from motives of health, and their object having been attained, they were about to move on to a more active "sphere of influence." The house was in a most tumble-down condition, and its tenants told us candidly they were often obliged to sit under umbrellas, as the owner was so deeply in debt to the local tradespeople that they would not execute any repairs for her.

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We stayed for a week at the little country inn at the town near which this house was situated ; the food provided was, as an Italian friend described it, "a shock to the stomach," but we wanted to look about in a way that could not be accomplished in day trips. I knew that if I rented the place for some years, and put it into habitable repair, and then wished, eventually, to buy it, we should be charged a fancy price for all our improvements. Accordingly I drew up a most elaborate document, providing for a lease of a certain number of years, with a purchase price at the end, should I wish to become the owner. The Italian lawyer, into whose hands I committed the matter, was filled with admiration at the intricate nature of our proposals, which the lady would probably have been forced by her creditors to accept,—but, just at this juncture, she was about to contract a second alliance with a Bentivoglio di Bologna (there is a fine mediæval ring about that), and could afford to snap her fingers both at creditors and legal adviser.

So we missed that chance of becoming landed proprietors. It was one of the very few places I have ever seen that I have wished to possess, but it was in a singularly lonely and unprotected situation, and some years later, when socialistic troubles and disturbances were more pronounced in that district than in any other part of Italy, I felt that it was perhaps fortunate that we were not in such an isolated position, and in a neighbourhood so renowned for the lawless violence of its inhabitants. All our friends had remonstrated at the idea of this retreat from British civili-

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zation ; and everyone begged us to look about in Tuscany, in the neighbourhood of Florence, before coming to a decision. We settled ourselves for the summer in the ground-floor of a wonderful old villa, near Michael Angelo's *Fortezza*, dating back to the days of the Republic, belonging to a *Romagnuolo*, a brother-in-law of Aurelio Saffi.

An extraordinarily mixed group of people tenanted this house, which had various outlets, and while one door opened on a steep *Costa*, another, far above it, led into a charming garden from which our apartment was entered. In one corner a widow with a family of daughters had a modest *quartiere*. These girls were umbrella-makers by trade, and formed a picturesque group at work in their small court-yard. A post-office clerk had a bedroom in another part of the house, a lucky thing for us, as he used to bring up our letters and papers late at night, when he returned from his bureau. This worthy made a futile attempt at a watery grave, owing to some unsuccessful love-affair, but the only results were a good ducking, and our landlord getting into a rage at his folly and turning him out. On the floor above us lived an Italian officer with his wife and child, and in an old tower on the top of all dwelt the *padrone di casa* and his foster brother, who attended to all his wants. The old gentleman dressed himself every day at five o'clock, and departed to his *café*, where he invariably spent his evenings.

A goat roamed about the garden, and lovely white pigeons used to fly in and out of the big vaulted chamber which was our drawing-room. I took this

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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*quartiere* for the summer months, just to have some kind of *pied-à-terre*. My companion was going over to England, and I felt that if I was bound to be dull, it was better to be so within reach of books and one or two old friends, than alone in a mountain retreat.

Delightful as this place was as a temporary summer abode, we felt it to be hopelessly unsuitable for a permanent residence for *Inglesi* like ourselves, requiring warmth and comfort indoors, for we well knew how piercingly cold the Tuscan winters could be. So we began to hunt about in the hot June days, resisting all the offers of our old *padrone di casa*: — he would give us his own sunny rooms in the tower, — and build an inner staircase to them from our apartment, anything, in short, in the brick and mortar line, if we would only remain. No Italian landlord can bear to see so desirable a possession as an English tenant leave his house without making an effort to retain him or her as the case may be.

Some friends, living at a considerable distance from where we were, wrote to us, saying that they thought we might find what we required in an old villa in their neighbourhood that had just been put in order — Italian order — for letting. Accordingly we left home early one morning to inspect this particular house, and to explore the neighbourhood generally. The place we had come so far to see was a rambling, old-fashioned farm-house, situated on a hill; the ascent would soon have knocked to pieces woman or beast, and it was away from any main road — it would have been admirable for a man and his wife wishing to rear a family

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of boys and girls in a back-woods kind of fashion, but we were not prepared to accept that kind of existence. Its one merit was the extremely small rent asked for a whole floor of quite good rooms; but, as I ran my eye over them, and took stock of all that would have to be done before these were habitable according to English ideas, I felt that the cheapness was of the kind likely to be very expensive in the long run,—so, much regretting the lost time and trouble, we prepared to return to our own part of the country. But, thinking it a pity not to vary our route, we struck, rather at random, across country, through various fields and lanes, exploring more than one tenement as we went along, and finally arriving, very hot and tired, at a small village of a not very inviting aspect.

In my time, in the "good old days," the fashion for English people to inhabit country-houses in the neighbourhood of Florence was almost unknown. Here and there an Anglo-Italian, settled in Italy for business or other reasons, might own a property on which he would spend a few weeks in summer. But the English in those days had not spread themselves over the face of the land, as they have since done, consequently I was quite ignorant of the lay of the land, or of where we were, or how far distant from Florence. A few steps ahead of us some large iron gates stood open, disclosing a long avenue thickly planted with trees. I pointed this out to my companion and suggested our exploring it, to see what might be found within. She, being very tired, and somewhat cross, protested loudly: "I cannot think," said she,

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"what makes you want to go there. It is evidently private ground; no one else does such things."

Now I had no kind of reason to suppose there was anything to be gained by walking up that avenue, but something seemed to impel me to go on. The trees on either side were mostly fine old ilexes, with here and there a cypress, but the place looked absolutely uncared for, and not a human being was to be seen. When we had walked a few hundred yards we came to a piece of broken wall on the left-hand side, terminating in an old stone archway, from which a paved court-yard ascended by a gentle slope to the door of a long, low, two-storied house, from the farther end of which a "stanzone" (lemon-house) projected into the garden. The side of this house abutted on the avenue, across which, directly facing the old archway, a short flight of steps appeared to lead into the bushes. Straight ahead of us was a row of cypress trees and beyond them a very large and palatial looking house.

My companion dropped down on one of the steps and declined to go any farther. We had had a long and very tiring day, and were rather depressed by the sense of time and trouble thrown away. "Well," I said resolutely, "I am going on to that house: I want to ask if there is anything to be let hereabouts." Accordingly I walked on to the big mansion, and was astonished to find the English arms over the ample portico! The bell was answered by a fine-looking old servant, who in answer to my query said, "No, the villino was let"—further enquiries elicited the information that it was let till the first of November.

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That was the precise date at which we wanted a house. The old man offered to show me the villino, but I felt that I had gained the information I wanted, and that it was better at that late hour to leave further investigations to another day, and to make the best of our way back to our distant home. But a few days later we returned to this place; I was very anxious to arrive, if possible, at some kind of decision before my companion left for England, having no fancy for choosing a settlement entirely on my own responsibility.

On our second visit the old servant explained to us much that had puzzled us in our first hurried survey: the large villa was an old Medicean structure, and over a side door was an inscription showing that it had originally belonged to some scion of the papal Medici. In more modern times it had been the country residence of the English minister then at the Court of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany. During his occupation the English arms had been placed over the main entrance, and the avenue we had so much admired had been the high road, thus affording the inmates the joy, so dear to Italians, of seeing all that goes on in the world from their windows. The English owner, being of a different way of thinking, persuaded the Commune — for a consideration — to carry the road around, thereby cutting into the adjoining *podere*, and in this way the small villino on the left had been incorporated with the property, with which it originally had no connection. Some twenty-five or thirty years before the time of which

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I am writing, the English ambassador of former years, having given up all hope of ever returning to this place, sold it to its present owner, a wealthy Austrian banker, who occupied it during the winter and spring months, but spent the summer at another property in Northern Europe, when the small villino was often let to a temporary tenant. We were shown over the house, which was of the most solid construction, and much larger than it looked, or indeed than we required. Among the dilapidated furniture it contained there were bits, here and there, that looked strangely homelike, and we found afterwards that, on one occasion, when extensive alterations were being made in the large house, its owners had themselves lived in the smaller one for more than a year, and no doubt furniture had been brought down there at that time, and had been allowed to remain.

I can always tell at a glance whether a house is adaptable or not, and I saw that this one had possibilities. There were some lemon-plants in the court-yard, beyond which stretched what could only be termed a piece of waste ground. I demurred at the size of the house, and the old servant obligingly offered to take us through the grounds to look at another villa just outside his master's property, which was then vacant.

This place did not appeal to us at all, as it looked out on the highroad, into a number of small, poor houses. On our way back, old Giuseppe suddenly turned up the small flight of steps on which my companion had sat down when she lifted up her voice in

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protest against my intrusive ways : we followed him, and, pushing through the shrubs by a narrow path, we suddenly found ourselves standing in a large park bordered by beautiful old ilexes and fir-trees, with splendid conifers, tulip-trees, and catalpas planted here and there.

The views were enchanting : towards the north we looked up to the highest point of the old Etruscan mother city ; eastward were the Vallombrosa hills, and lying down below, veiled in the misty light of the hot June sun, were the domes and spires of Florence, with the blue Apennines rising beyond, towards the far south. At the head of this park was the back or garden entrance to the large villa, and a sidewalk led from it to the gardens proper, now alas ! in a fearful state of "decadence."

The whole place was a perfect revelation to me. With perhaps the single exception of the royal villa of Quarto, I had never seen, nor have I since ever seen, any place in Tuscany to compare with it. So great an expanse of level ground is very unusual there, and it was the blending of the English with the Italian element of beauty that gave it so distinctive a character, and so great a charm. Much of the planting had been done in the far-off days of the English owners. The back of the large villa was covered with roses and jasmine, and the gardens, though in a pitiable state of neglect, bore traces of what they must once have been, when in the care of English gardeners, and when their mistress herself was often at work in them at five o'clock of a summer morning.

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The park quite decided us that here we were going to establish ourselves, looking on the house merely as a place in which to sleep. We knew enough of the ways of the country to understand that there would be no such restrictions as prevail in England, and that we should practically have the run of the place. But it was months before matters were arranged. The owner was abroad; his secretary, with whom all business matters were transacted, was ill during a great part of that summer; I was away in the mountains during August, and when I returned and took up the thread of negotiations, so many difficulties had to be overcome that I was several times on the point of throwing up the matter. I wanted a nine years' lease, the longest legal term in Tuscany; but this was absolutely declined, and I was unwillingly obliged to content myself with a two years' agreement. The secretary explained that they never had had a permanent tenant there and would like to see how the arrangement worked before committing themselves to a longer period. I felt there was reason in this, but there was so much to be done to the house that it was a great venture for me, and had we been obliged to give it up at the end of two years the loss would have been very great. Had I been dealing with an Italian we should certainly either have had our rent doubled or been turned out on our improvements; but with an Austrian it was different. Had I been resident in Tuscany in more recent times, I should have known that it was a matter of no importance to the owner whether the little house was let or not let, and I can now never

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help smiling when I think how supremely ridiculous I must have appeared in many ways during these negotiations. I must have been a trial to the secretary, for all my ideas were of the most precise and British order, and things in Italy are not worked on those lines. Indeed we had several battles royal, chiefly from want of the gift of tongues ; he was a German, speaking no English but only Italian and French, I do not speak German, so that we were both talking in a foreign language. However, I think I may say that these little differences were all forgotten and forgiven in later years.

The few friends I had in the neighbourhood raised a chorus of remonstrances when my projects were unfolded to them. The house stood very near the high-road on one side, and an Italian friend made his wife write to me to say he felt it his duty to warn me of all the dangers to which we should be exposed ; and my banker, when he heard that I intended being my own clerk of the works, exclaimed that for a *signora forestiera* to begin on her own account to deal with workmen appeared to him a very poor prospect. I had offered a quite moderate rent, with the proviso that I would myself do whatever was required inside the house, but stipulated for the entire use of the piece of ground attached to it. In making this offer I was not aware that it was precisely the arrangement best suited to the person to whom it was proposed, who hated to be "bothered," and who would certainly not have undertaken such alterations as I wished to make.

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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In Italy it is always best to avoid any arrangements with a landlord which provide for his undertaking alterations that the tenant wishes to have done ; the result is always unsatisfactory, both in the quality of the work accomplished, and in the friction engendered on both sides.

On the first of November I took possession of my new residence, but some kind friends insisted on my spending a week with them so as to allow of one or two rooms being put into some sort of order before I commenced what was certainly the roughest time I had ever experienced in my life. I had my own invaluable Scotch maid, and engaged an excellent Italian woman as *bonne à tout faire* till I got into order, and, for the next three months, I may say we lived with the work-people. Partitions were taken down, indeed I narrowly escaped pulling down the main wall of the house. We were spared this disaster owing to the visit of a young Scotch friend, an architect, and have always felt since that he deserved a memorial tablet on the wall of the house ! There were no bells, and old Giuseppe, who took a deep interest in our proceedings, could not understand why one in each room should be deemed necessary.

“ Surely ” he said “ one to every three rooms would suffice.” During all that fatiguing time, and indeed to the end of his life, he remained our staunch friend, and was always ready to help us in any way he could. I put in two additional windows in the drawing-room, and several open terra-cotta stoves, for there were only two fire-places in the house ; and when the brick-

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layers, masons, and bell-hangers had departed, they were succeeded by the painters.

I employed a very good decorator, and the house was stencilled throughout in artistic designs, copied from old Italian brocades. Although I had a fair knowledge of Italian, my vocabulary naturally did not include such technical terms as the work-people often had occasion to use, and how the whole thing was accomplished remains a surprise to me to this day. The next step was to have a good *stipettajo* (a superior carpenter) to repair and put in order all the old furniture left in the house. This work occupied about six weeks ; the Junior Partner joined me in December, and about Christmas such furniture as I had stored in London arrived. It was only the surplus which our little London house could not accommodate, after our old home was broken up, and many of our possessions were ludicrously out of keeping with their new abode.

There was one beautiful old marquetry bureau we called our letter of credit, as it made such an impression on every foreigner who had occasion to call, and quite established our character for respectability.

In all the subsequent winters we have spent here, I have never seen so beautiful a spell of weather as there was that year. In November the rains came down in quite tropical fashion, but after that we had from eight to ten weeks of clear, brilliant sunshine, from ten A.M. to four P.M. When the sun went down the cold was intense, and of course we had not then reached the stage of peace and comfort that came in

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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after years, and which only long occupation of a house can give. Our one family male adviser had carefully impressed upon us, in his letters, the advisability of having a formal contract of our tenancy drawn up by an Italian lawyer. There was a good deal of wrangling over conditions, but I believed everything to be straight and in order, so it was a terrible shock when we discovered that, because no mention had been made in this document of the stanzone, it was not included in the let, but was to remain, as it always had been, in the hands of the villa gardeners.

These worthies were our sworn foes; they had always had possession of the sunny court-yard, with its convenient stone benches for forcing their early bulbs, and were deeply aggrieved at the new order of things. The annoyance that we suffered at their hands in the next two years, is not to be described. In winter they came about ten A.M. to open the doors of the stanzone, and again in the afternoon at four P.M. to close them.

The bedrock of the Tuscan character is suspicion; and, while the doors stood open, a piece of old torn wire-netting was placed across the opening, for fear we should presume to enter and pick their lemons. Nor was this all; they had always kept their own stock of wine in the cellars beneath the stanzone, and they, their wives, and their children, had the right to come and pester us at all hours, under pretext of getting out a flask of wine, but in reality to pry about and see what we outside barbarians were up to! Partly on this account, and also because the avenue gates stood open, there being at that time no porter's lodge, I put up

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a wooden gate inside the stone arch. It was brought home and placed there late one evening, and next morning when the head-gardener presented himself, a barrel of wine on his back, and found this out-work, he dropped the barrel on the ground, and—used *language*.

Later in the day I had a polite note from the secretary, begging me to give this man a key of the gate! I had foreseen the probability of this request, and had had the gate made keyless, opening by a spring from the inside, so I could truthfully reply that we had not ourselves a key, but if the gardeners would ring the bell, they would at all times be admitted. This of course they never did, but made tracks through the shrubbery and gave us as much annoyance as possible.

Quite apart from their visitations, the gate was, at that time, an absolute necessity, for we lived mostly with the hall-door standing wide open, and beggars used to walk up the avenue and would not have scrupled to walk into our rooms.

I had several pieces of old English silver standing on shelves in the dining-room, and when we met any friends, it became a regular joke to enquire if the silver had yet been stolen. In later years a porter's lodge was built, and the gates kept closed, an immense improvement. And when our first term of two years had expired, I made it a *sine qua non* that I should have possession of the stanzone.

A day or two before it was to pass into our hands I found the two gardeners carefully laying in a sup-

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ply of wine, and pointed out to them what a foolish proceeding this was, as the wine would spoil by removal ; sure enough, when the day came that delivered us from their rule, they represented that this would be the case, and implored me to allow it to remain. I stood firm, and pointed out that as I was then paying for the use of the stanzone, it was not likely that I should keep it for their use and advantage.

From that time we had peace, to a certain extent, but they have never forgiven us, and they were both men of the worst Italian type, absolutely false, sly and dishonest, and sticking at nothing to serve their own purposes.

There was yet another very unfortunate discovery to be made, and a much more serious one, because practically irremediable : the water supply was very deficient. I can blame no one, not even myself, for not having seen better after this all-important matter, because when you are shown a large house cistern and two garden cisterns, it is difficult to realize, if you have never been dependent on rain water only, how extremely uncertain a thing it is in a climate like that of Tuscany. There was no well or spring on the whole property ; the former English owners had made what were practically inexhaustible cisterns at the big villa. These Italian cisterns are underground bricked chambers, and are most costly things to make. No doubt an Italian family living in our house would have found the water supply sufficient, but for English people requiring daily baths, and with friends fre-

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quently visiting them, it was another matter. With regard to the garden, of course it was my own affair if I planted it so extensively as to require a larger supply than existed.

Our contract gave us the right of fetching water for the use of the house at all times from the big villa, but not for garden purposes, and we have frequently been obliged to have it brought in barrels from a considerable distance.

It is only experience that can teach one such things as these. If I were again taking a place in Tuscany, I should now be able to judge if the square *métrage* of cisterns would suffice for our consumption.

But I think these were the only two blunders we made as regards our contract, and in the work done indoors everything was satisfactory, with the exception that in two of the rooms the stove-pipes were somewhat smaller than was desirable.

There is certainly a Providence watching over stray and forlorn people!

## *Chapter II.*

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### *First Plantings and Some Subsequent Developments*

“A poor thing Sir, but mine own.”

*As You Like It*

“A thing of shreds and patches.”

*Hamlet*

Two months went by before I was sufficiently free from the plague of work-people to have leisure to turn my attention to the out-of-door department. No doubt, even in civilized England, workmen now-a-days require some supervision; but here, in democratic Tuscany, where the “I am as good as you” spirit prevails, if you leave them alone for ever so short a time, you will find something has been done the direct opposite of what you wished and intended. Italians are the most conceited people on the face of the earth, and have a very annoying habit of finishing your sentence for you, instead of listening to what you wish to say, and it is best to wait till they have finished assuring you that they perfectly understand your wishes, before quietly, but very decidedly, requesting them to listen to your explanations instead of favouring you with theirs.

The English idea that foreign workmen are better “all round” men than with us, is a great mistake, and in no country are trades more specialized than in Tuscany, where an upholsterer capable of making up carpets and curtains knows nothing of polishing furni-



THE GRASS WALK



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ture. For that a polisher must be called in, and he, in his turn, is quite ignorant of the mysteries of varnishing. To find a "handy man" in a Tuscan country district is very rare. We had to buy our experience of this sort of detail; and once, in early days, when I had settled with an upholsterer to polish up the old furniture left in the house, it was smeared in such a way that it had all to be re-scraped. The excuse given by the individual was that it was not his trade, and to the further question why in that case he had undertaken the job, the reply was, "that it was necessary to leave something for the others to do." This benevolent view did not commend itself to us, and, later on, when this man called to ask if we had no work for him, he was told that his services would not again be required.

We had an excellent cabinet-maker in the house, repairing the old furniture which had been left in it, for about six weeks; this man was quite an exception to the general rule, always came for orders before beginning any job, and went carefully into measurements with the Junior Partner. And our Scotch maid was clever at upholstery, but even with these advantages we found it better that one of us should always be at home during these first months, for, so surely as we were both absent, something was done that had to be undone next day.

But in January I began to think it would be well to take advantage of the magnificent weather to have the ground well trenched and manured.

My great difficulty then, a difficulty that in a certain degree has continued to this day, was to get the

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old trees about us cut back and thinned out. Shade, in a climate such as Tuscany, where the hot summer is so prolonged, is of great value, but we were buried among old trees and foliage ; they literally ate all the air ; and their old roots were a terrible nuisance. The owner was absolutely devoid of any gardening instincts, but he had a horror of anything being cut away, and his gardeners were always in league to prevent anything that I wanted done being carried out.

However, by dint of great energy, I did succeed in persuading the secretary to consent to clearing out the shrubbery, on our side of the avenue, to a depth of about seven feet, which gave us a good border, running down the whole length of the garden.

Just as the villa gardeners had finished this work, I heard of a good gardener, who was available for a job, and engaged him temporarily to put the place into something like order. He was with us for nearly three months, when he left Tuscany to take up a permanent post with some of the Borghese family in Rome. Labour is still very cheap in Tuscany, but at that time I could not have afforded a permanent gardener, nor was there work enough for one at that stage of the proceedings, least of all for a man of such qualifications as his ; but I thought myself very fortunate in getting him, as so much depends on the way first plantings are done.

The ordinary garden soil in these parts is, as the head of the Botanical Gardens at Hong Kong lately described what he has to do with, "very extra-

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ordinary indeed," and is only good for vines and tea-roses. Almost everything else must have its own particular compost; good garden soil, such as we should take in England as a matter of course, does not exist out here; indeed many of the gardens are formed of a few feet of earth on a foundation of rock. It is partly owing to this, and partly to the want of water, and also for the convenience of shifting from sun to shade, that so much of the Tuscan gardening consists of plants grown in pots. In our own case we had not the difficulty of the rock foundation to deal with, for the great distinction of this property is, that it possesses an extent of level ground most unusual in this mountainous region. But wherever we dug seemed a kind of Monte Testaccio: the most extraordinary deposits of broken crockery, old wine-flasks, stones of all sorts and sizes,—in short everything that should *not* have been in a garden seemed to be there. The earth was of a sticky yellow substance, though not clay, and was unlike any soil I had ever seen before; but after fifteen years of constant manuring and attention it is now quite possible. Having no stable, all the manure has to be bought, and that, as well as many other composts, come from a great distance, so that we turn, as much as possible, everything to account. And it is surprising how much good soil can be got out of such *spazzatura* as, in England, would go into the dust-bin; all this, as well as the decayed leaves and ordinary garden refuse, are buried in one or two pits dug at the bottom of the garden, and well turned over from time to time; and of course the

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wood ash, of which we have quantities from the winter's firing, is of itself a most valuable manure.

One day last year I was showing my little garden to a great botanical authority he looked at the soil, remarked on its superiority, and said that, with such soil as *that*, one might grow anything. I wished he had seen it in its original condition!

I see that the poet-laureate has been taken to task by one of his critics for his defective "orientation," and possibly mine will be considered equally faulty when I say that the garden (which is in the shape of a Latin cross, minus the upper part) lies southeast and southwest, the shrubbery being the southeastern boundary. It is entered from the court-yard in front of the house, which no doubt was originally the threshing-floor. Entering this court-yard, through the arch to which I have already alluded, the ground slopes upwards to the door of the house by a very gentle ascent; about a third of the space is enclosed by a low brick wall, four feet in height at its starting-point, but almost flush with the pavement at the top. This enclosure had been intended for an azalea-bed, as the soil is composed entirely of decayed *casta-  
gna*, which in Tuscany is the equivalent for, and the nearest approach to, our peat. There was very little in this bed when we first came; a fine old camellia-tree with semi-double scarlet flowers and big yellow anthers, a very old bush of *Magnolia fiscata* (a plant I had only once seen in England, and that was at Kew; I was familiar with it in China, where the Chinese women make necklaces of its flowers, as English

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babies thread daisies), a common rhododendron, one or two semi-moribund azaleas, and, at the upper end, a big cherry tree.

I had hoped to lift some of the paving-stones on the right hand side of the court-yard, so as to form a small border against the house, where we could plant creepers. But unfortunately we found the overflow pipe of one of the garden cisterns ran down there, and it was only at the upper part that a paving-stone here and there could be moved, good soil inserted, and plants put in. In the angle formed by the wall at the side of the arch, we placed one of the large terra-cotta lemon-tubs, *conche*; and planting in these is really equivalent to the open ground,—and the same may be said of the long magnolia pots, several of which we put against the house wall, under the dining-room windows. The house itself was entered by two wide, long steps, and was, therefore, well above the ground, beneath which was extensive cellarage. Many years ago an architect friend had impressed upon me never to take a house built on the ground. I have often blessed him for this good advice, for, even in this climate, and in the hottest day of summer, I can tell as soon as I enter a house if there is no cellarage beneath the ground-floor rooms; and in England, the want of it would soon spell rheumatism to a fearful extent. On the left of these steps, as you entered the house, there ran all along, beneath the drawing-room windows, what looked like two stone benches, one raised above the other. Some years after, when I had found it im-

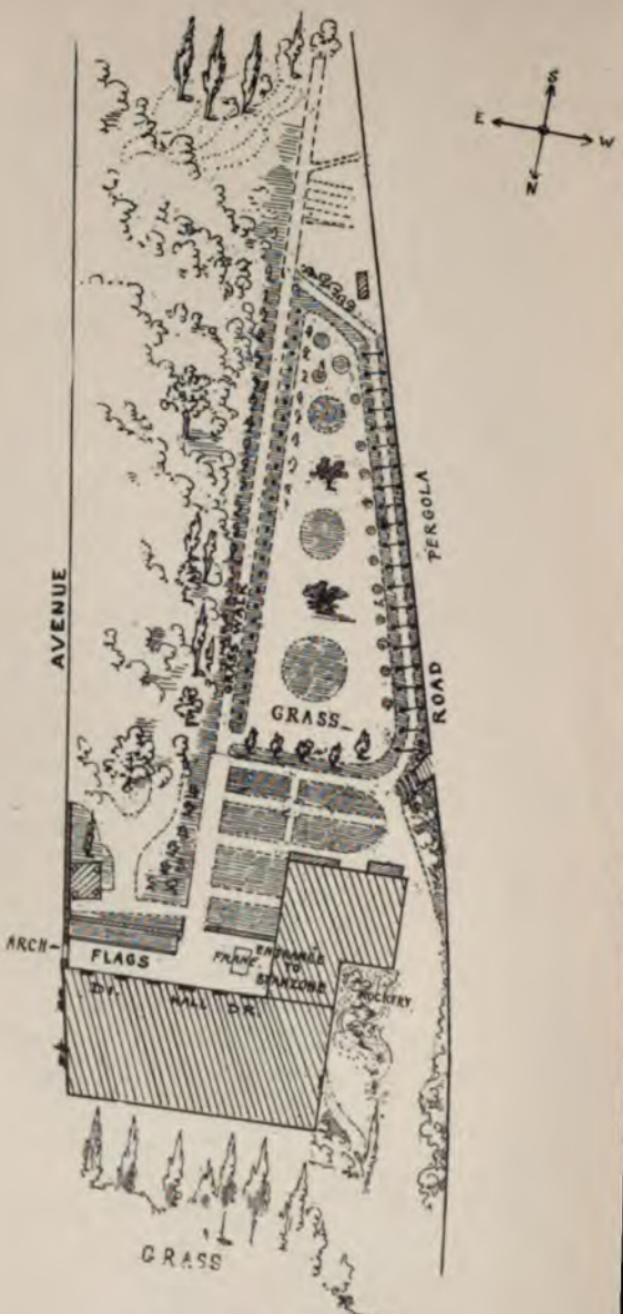
## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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possible to succeed in growing roses and other creepers in pots, I got a bricklayer to unpick, so to say, these benches, wishing to see if it were possible to plant in the earth beneath, so as to cover the walls on this side; and we then found that they were only composed of brick and mortar cemented over, and were hollow inside. So by a liberal supply of good soil beneath, and having made two openings above, we were able to plant our roses, etc., satisfactorily, and all that side of the house is now covered with greenery in English fashion. The benches themselves were so admirably adapted for displaying pots of flowers to the best advantage, that we were much envied their possession by many people with larger and more pretentious gardens than mine could ever lay claim to be.

The stanzone joined on to the house at the upper end of the court-yard, and ran at a right angle from it down into the garden. A low brick wall divided the latter from the court-yard, and ran right round it, from the stanzone end to the azalea bed before mentioned. It was about two feet in width, and so afforded another excellent position for a display of pot plants. Just opposite the hall-door a break in this low wall was flanked by two brick uprights, supporting old terra-cotta vases. A wire arch stretched between these, over which white and yellow jasmine and roses were trained. By this opening the garden proper was entered, for the paved court-yard, with its various arrangements of pots, forms a kind of parterre, separate from the real earth. This last we thought





PLAN OF THE GARDEN

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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ourselves most fortunate in possessing, as it is quite usual in Tuscany to find the garden consisting mainly of an expanse of gravel on which pots are placed, with perhaps here and there a little patch dug out, and filled with earth.

Standing under this trellis arch and looking down upon the garden, one sees that it resembles in shape, as I have said, a Latin cross, the bar of the cross being represented by about one third of our ground, lying across the whole length of the house and somewhat further on the west side, by reason of the ground then taking a curve as it passes the lower end of the stanzone, and winding round towards the north. The remaining two-thirds go, as it were, to the long division of the cross. The reason of this last portion being so much narrower is, that the wide shrubbery forming one bank of the avenue marches with our ground, and not only deprives us of our share of the morning sun in winter, but occupies soil which I felt I could have turned to much better account. The upper part, the cross-bar of the garden, was already laid out in a fashion. A gravel walk on the left of the entrance arch led to a most picturesque old arbour formed of wooden supports, surmounted by a huge iron dome wreathed with Virginian creeper, which had spread along the wall to the old stone archway. No doubt this was the place from which, in former years, when the avenue was the high road, the farmer's family used to sit of an evening and look out upon the world.

Below this a bank sloped down to the avenue, and just beyond, heading the shrubbery, a splendid old

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acacia tree spread its sheltering branches. This tree was most valuable to us, on account of the shady corner it afforded, both for our garden chairs and for the plants when the summer heat rendered necessary their removal from the sunny court-yard. Opposite the arbour was a triangular bed, the only occupants of which were a very old *Lagerstroemia indica* and a huge chimonanthus bush, called here "Pampadora." *Lagerstroemias* do very well in North Italy, where the brilliant colour of their flowers adds much to the beauty of the Lake gardens, particularly in the neighbourhood of Lago d'Orta. But this dry Tuscan air does not suit them, and this particular specimen has been so utterly neglected that it is rather a hopeless tree, and seldom flowers. The chimonanthus had been equally ill-treated, but it was open to pruning, and rewards us now by an inexhaustible supply of its fragrant flowers for the house, a real treasure in the months of December and January, when it blossoms.

We dug out a good bed at the foot of the acacia tree for hardy ferns, planting them among old tree roots and stumps. This was carpeted with scillas, snow-drops, and yellow primroses, and after these had died down in summer, our few palm trees, and the more delicate ferns and foliage plants stood there, forming a very effective group. There was also room in this part of the garden to stand the azaleas, in big terracotta *conche*, with which, in later years, the court-yard was furnished. Had these been left in their winter station during April and May, the hot sun would have shrivelled up their delicate blossoms in a very

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few days, whereas in this partial shade their flowering was prolonged for weeks, and they had a most beautiful half "surprise" effect as one turned off the main walk to this corner, the one bit of ground that lent itself to a certain delusive idea of space beyond. Alas ! The "beyond" was quite real, but it was the old shrubbery.

Returning to the garden entrance,—on the right of the main gravel walk were seven quite good and spacious beds, oblong in shape ; the first of these lay just under the little dividing wall of the court-yard, and was raised about two feet above the level of the ground, and bordered with large rough stones, among which I inserted variegated periwinkles ; the next, divided from it by a narrow path, lay just below, and both were completely sheltered from cold winds by the stanzone, to the windows of which they extended. Further on were four beds, intersected by narrow paths ; in the centre of them we erected a kind of small arbour, or *berceau*, as it is called here, just to break the somewhat uninteresting effect of so much flat ground, and planted against it honeysuckles of all sorts, and pillar roses. The two lower of these beds were rounded off in semicircle fashion, and along the end of the farther one we put a wire fence, and planted climbing roses against it. The seventh bed of this section was a long narrow strip running down under the end of the stanzone. It was already planted with Saffrano and Maréchal Niel roses, and I had a deep brick edging made in front of it and at both ends, which enabled us to place a straw covering over it in cold

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weather. For many years this bed was given up to Neapolitan violets,—this autumn I have had them all transferred to pots, and housed in one of the frames, to leave the bed free for freesias, that we may have a sufficiency of these most useful flowers for table decoration, without robbing the pots that stand round the house.

The main garden walk turns down past these beds, and leads to a short flight of steps from which a little door in the garden-wall opens on the highroad. All the garden lies on a gradual, but very distinct slope, so that the road beneath is quite concealed, and, in later years, when hedges of roses and shrubs had been established, no one could have guessed that any high-road was so close at hand. The walk followed a curve that made the ground so much wider at this part, and continued past the back of the stanzone, round to the north side of the house.

At this side, under our northwest windows, there lay a large plot of ground, and the rooms on that side, though small, formed a charming summer apartment, entered from the garden by a glass door. They were entirely distinct from the rest of the house, and must at some time or other have been an addition to it. Below the windows were two fine Judas-trees and a very large pittosporum. The former of these were, of course, bare of leaves when we took possession, and I had not the least idea what they were, and only knew that they darkened the windows terribly, and, I grieve to say, I persuaded the villa gardeners to cut one of them down to about half its original height. It has sur-

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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vived and thrown out fresh shoots, but in a maimed and impoverished way. The other is, I think, the finest specimen of this tree I have ever seen, and is a beautiful object in spring, when in full blossom, towering over the stanzone roof. The perfume of the pittosporum, when in flower, is almost overpowering through the rooms on that side. I have only once seen this shrub in flower in England, and that was in a sheltered garden in Cornwall, and, oddly enough, it was in the late autumn that I saw it in flower. I took it then to be some sort of daphne, which it partly resembles as to the flower, but its scent is heavy and oppressive, and has none of the peculiar delicacy of the daphne scent. Here in Tuscany it flowers in June, and even in May, if the spring is an early one.

The back of the house looked to the north, and a thick plantation of fir-trees, though somewhat darkening the kitchen and pantry quarters, had the advantage of protecting us from cold winds, and of making that part pleasantly cool and shady in summer. The tops of these firs reached far above our roof and had a most picturesque effect as one looked back at the house from the garden. The big villa lay above and beyond this plantation, which effectually shut out our humble dwelling from the view of the owner; and below it was a delightful stretch of grass planted with cypresses and other trees, and a small thicket of lilac bushes close to our glass door. There was also a beautiful "Naples Laurel" at this corner. I don't remember to have seen this variety of laurel at home; the flowers grow in large white clusters, and have a

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peculiar scent much disliked by Italians. It makes its new leaves in April, when the old ones turn a brilliant scarlet as they fall. One of the most beautiful funeral wreaths we ever made had these red leaves placed in and out among the white flowers composing it.

This grass-field gave us just the right aspect for all our spring-flowering pot-plants, azaleas, imantophyllums, callas, etc., during the hot summer months, and though it did not form part of our small domain, no difficulty was ever made about our plants standing there from July to October, when they were again transferred to their winter quarters round the house.

Returning to the rose-beds and, looking from them down upon the main body of the garden ground,—the long part of the cross,—a more unpromising piece of land could not be imagined ; but it possessed one great treasure, a grass walk, which ran parallel with the shrubbery, down to the very end of the garden, where a clump of cypress trees closed it in. I have always thought it was this grass walk that gave our garden the peculiarly English look it had, even in those early days, and which, *pace* Mrs. Earle, is much more to my taste than the hard gravel paths of an Italian garden. One friend, the owner of a very superior domain, used to come and look at it, and aver with a sigh that *that* grass walk was worth the whole of his place put together,—glass houses and gardeners included.

On the left of this walk was the newly cleared ground, cribbed from the shrubbery. The gardeners never forgave us that clearing out—“It was a *bel*

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*bosco, Signora,*" they said, " till you spoilt it." That their *bel bosco* was not what we wanted, was a thing of which they took no account, and they had been so left to their own devices and so accustomed to have their own way in everything, that they deeply resented the change entailed by their masters having chosen to let the villino with its adjacent ground. Of course, had it been possible for us to be entirely independent of them, I would have been only too thankful, but by the " law of the land," both written and unwritten, I had not the right to prune a shrub, or cut a twig of all those old trees; and it was, therefore, very important to us to keep on some sort of terms with them. As it was I got into dire disgrace in those first months, from sheer ignorance of the customs of the country, and often was wholly unconscious of having done anything amiss. However, one day I put the finishing touch to all my enormities, and nearly got turned out.

There were several young vines planted between the tea-roses against the walls of the stanzone, and one in particular grew just where I specially wanted to plant a Banksia rose for grafting purposes. I was pottering about with my own gardener, and said to him cheerfully, "I think this vine had much better come out altogether." He was a reasoning human being, and not a machine, and among other gifts, possessed a most beautiful voice, with which, like St. Francis, he used to sing to his brothers and sisters, the birds. He looked at me a little dubiously and said, with a suspicion of remonstrance in his voice, "Signora, it's a

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Salamanna." Now, although I had a fair knowledge of Italian, not perhaps quite fit for court circles, of technical terms I knew little, and I had not the faintest notion of what a Salamanna vine was, and, unfortunately, I was at that time so impressed with the superiority of my British ways that it did not even occur to me to enquire. So, happy in my ignorance, and feeling quite cocksure of the benefits I was about to confer on the owner's estate, I said gaily, "Oh never mind, we'll have it out." Just then, as ill-luck would have it, old Giuseppe was passing up the avenue, and, though very friendly to us in a general way, he went straight to the secretary and "informed." Within a quarter of an hour I received a missive stating that much had been borne in silence, but that the cup of my iniquities had now overflowed, and that if my extirpatory practices were not at once and for ever abandoned, it would be his duty to bring them to the notice of the "Commendatore"—with a very large capital C. After reading this composition, I thought it prudent to go in person and endeavour to put matters to rights.

It was a *Muscatel* vine that I had uprooted, and the gist of the offence was, that these grapes being the one fruit to which the Commendatore was specially devoted, these young vines had been planted with a view to a small extra provision of this fruit. I offered—so British—to pay for the value of the vine, but was waved aside with scorn. The adversary was a Prussian, and the whole principle of authority was at stake. Luckily for me, the poor man had been con-

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fined to the house by illness during the first weeks of our tenancy, as had he been about, I should probably have been called to order much sooner. However, we patched up an armed neutrality. The other vines never did any good, and some years after I got leave to uproot them all. "Do it quietly, Signora, and say nothing about it," were my instructions. Most things come to them who know how to wait, and *not* to cut down Salamanna grapes in Tuscany, where such a crime is looked upon much as shooting foxes or poisoning hounds would be in "the shires."

The part of the ground lying between the grass walk and the boundary-wall on the west side was simply like a ploughed field, and the only things growing in it were two old fig-trees, which gave us abundance of excellent green figs and considerable shade, which I valued more. We made a good, wide border on the right of the grass walk, and two similar long borders on the farther side, divided by a gravel walk, which began at the cancellino steps. A short border ran across, along which we put a wire fence, and planted against it such Bengal roses as Laurette Messimy, Eugénie Resal, Irene Watts and others of that section, as well as some of the strong growing autumn flowering roses, Marie Henriette, Madame Metral, etc. An old olive-tree stump had been left near the beginning of this short border; its trunk was clothed with Jasminium nudiflorum, and the roses found their way into its upper branches. This little yellow jasmine is much later flowering here than in England, and seldom shows blossom before Febru-

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ary. I think this must come from the want of moisture in the air, for I remember it in the south of Cornwall, flowering in October. The ground lying between these long borders I laid down in grass, not with any delusive hope of ever having decent English turf, but simply because grass makes a better background for shrubs and colour effects than anything else. We cut out various beds upon it, between and beyond the two fig-trees. Later on, a row of small beds were added on the west side, in a fashion that I have no doubt merits the condemnation of being "spotty." I dare say they are, but I was so hard up for room to plant things I wanted to have, that it was Hobson's choice.

Like many other gardeners, I started from the "landscape view" point, and determined that everything should be planted *relativamente*. That is all very well up to a certain point, but when every effect has been thought out, and every bit of ground seems full, and things you "want to have" are always cropping up, it comes to this,—that they must either be popped into odd corners, or foregone altogether. Indeed I looked on the garden so much as existing for its own sake, that for some years, before flowers were plentiful in it, I would buy them in the market when required for the house, rather than rob the garden of those it possessed. This put the finishing stroke to any reputation for sanity I may ever have enjoyed. To have a garden, and not carry its flowers to market, was witnessless enough, according to the Tuscan standard, but to have flowers in the ground, and leave them there just for the pleasure of looking at them, while you wasted

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good money on buying what other folks raised and sold,—“May the saints preserve us all from such mid-summer madness as that!”

I kept no diary of garden work, but our first planting was to fill the newly cleared border to the left of the grass walk with flowering shrubs. These are very cheap in Tuscany, and many beautiful things are to be had that are only now beginning to be introduced into English gardens. My long shrub border was planted according to my own design, and consisted of the large-leaved pale green *Mahonia*, *Beali*, *Spirea prunifolia*, which, grown as a pillar plant, has a most lovely effect in spring, when its long sprays of white blossoms hang down, from a height of seven or eight feet, in wreaths and festoons; *Pittosporum*, both the dark green and the variegated leaved kinds, *Guelder roses*, called here “*Pallone di Maggio*,” and *Pirus Japonica*, which in this country is grown in balloon fashion, trained round and round, and very handsome it looks, when a mass of scarlet or pink flowers. Somewhat behind these are *Acera negunda variegata*, their pale green and white foliage showing well against the dark background of the old shrubbery trees, but these thrive better in North Italy than in this dry Tuscan climate, and I have been frequently obliged to replace them.

Among these shrubs are Persian briars, *La France*, and many old-fashioned Italian *borracina* roses, red and crimson; sundry herbaceous plants and clumps of wallflowers and tulips; in front of the shrubs are herbaceous peonies of all sorts and colours, mostly

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picked up in old gardens here. I now have a good named collection of them in another place, and beautiful tree-peonies on the grass; but those in this border I got during our first years here, just making a note where I had seen a good one in flower, and buying offshoots of it in the autumn. Peonies do very well here, and there is no more satisfactory flower, from its earliest red shoots to its lovely blossoms, which have also the great merit of standing long when cut.

Some years later all my friends wanted a bit of those peonies, and I desired the gardener to take as many off-shoots as he could, without spoiling the plants. But they took two seasons to recover my generosity, so ever since I have been very chary of dividing them. In front of the peonies are clumps of different varieties of Japanese anemones, most useful for cutting in the autumn, and at the very edge, close to the grass walk, are groups of crocuses planted with a regard for a certain effect of colour, and in March, when these are in flower, they form one of the most beautiful of the garden effects.

Crocuses bastardize here after several years, and these have been renewed several times, but nothing would induce me to forego these crocus groups. For the border on the right of the grass walk I have an edging of them in mixture, and I know of nothing among spring flowers that gives the same amount of beauty at so small a cost. Later on, this right hand border was filled with oleander plants of various tints, rose, pale pink, white, yellow; both single and double flowering, the former being much the most beautiful.

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For many years we carpeted the ground below and between the oleanders with daffodils, but, by degrees, these have all been transferred to the grass — partly because their effect, grown upon the latter, was so much better, but also because I wanted additional room for varieties of English and Spanish irises. Beyond the oleanders are about thirty pillar roses; I left the selection of these entirely to Monsieur Guillôt of Lyons, only telling him that I wanted their colours kept entirely to white, cream, and shades of yellow and orange.

On the other side of these roses is a fringe of pale blue irises, and planted on the grass are various lovely spring-flowering shrubs and fruit trees, double almond (the most beautiful of them all), double peach, double plum, *Weigelia rosea*, *Choisya ternata*, a shrub which in this climate is of much slower growth than it appears to be in England, and one which I confess seems to me to be much overrated at present — all these and many others have the patch of earth surrounding them planted with snowdrops and *Scilla bifolia*, for first spring flowering. To these succeed nasturtiums, from the pale *La Perle* to the deepest orange, almost black; and of course still later on there might be lovely annuals there, but alas! our scanty water supply compels us to restrict our autumn effects. I think this autumn I shall have pink ivy-leaved pelargoniums, which stand any amount of heat and drought.

Crossing the grass to the other side, and standing at the beginning of the gravel walk, the border on

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the left hand is divided from the grass by a hedge of red Bengal roses of sorts and kinds, running the whole length of the garden, some of them very large and double and their flowers shading from pale pink in the centre to deep red at the edge. I cannot now remember from whom we had these roses, but I think they also must have come from Monsieur Guillot, the raiser of so many of the best modern roses. Twice a year, from the end of March to July, and again from September to Christmas, this hedge is one mass of roses, flowered down to the ground. Standing at either end and looking along it in the light of the setting sun, the gorgeous effect of colour is something not easily forgotten. Nothing in my little garden has received so much admiration as this rose hedge; beneath it tea-roses are planted all along the border, which is finished off with a wide belt of white pinks—this spring we planted, behind these last, a double row of tulips, two hundred in each row, the double "Yellow Rose" behind the pinks, and, beyond that, the purple "Couleur de Vin." The effect was very lovely. On the grass side of the red-rose hedge are our Madonna lilies, big clumps of which alternate with herbaceous peonies, and when the tall flowering stems of the lilies rear their stately heads against the dark red-roses, they make a lovely picture.

The border on the right of the gravel walk was, for some years, a mass of old ivy and laurel stumps, and I could get nothing to grow in it. But eventually we got rid of the latter, leaving only the ivy to

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clothe the boundary wall, and I then planted pink China roses, with some Scotch briers all along the side, facing the dark red on the opposite border. I had the greatest difficulty in getting these Scotch briers, so few nurserymen, even in Scotland, grow them now. Among all garden scents, I know of none so sweet as that of the small flowers of these roses. This border was latterly filled entirely with irises, the early flowering *Stylosa pumila*, and other dwarf kinds in front, and Spanish and Germanica behind. I have Susiana also in this border, which is a very sheltered and sunny one; but though the latter flower fairly well, they do not make the big clumps into which their Germanic brethren develop. This border is edged with violets, and we generally have our earliest pickings from it.

It will be seen from the above descriptions that I prefer things grown in masses, and I much wish now that our rose-beds had been planted more in that fashion and in fewer varieties. These beds take about thirty-five roses apiece, planted about two feet apart each way. I bought our first roses from a local nurseryman, and might as well have thrown the money they cost into the Arno. Then I tried a Belgian firm, who did not prove much more satisfactory, and finally landed with Monsieur Guillot, from whom I now have all my roses; and it would be difficult to improve on them, though now and then there is a failure.

The first of the five oblong beds, being the most sheltered, contains the more delicate teas; the second,

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just below it, has teas and tea hybrids ; below that again, bed number three contains hybrid perpetuals in dark reds and crimsons. Unless these last are picked in the early morning, they become discoloured after a very few hours of hot sunshine. The fourth bed contains moss roses of many shades, from pure white to deep crimson ; these are pegged down so as to entirely cover the bed. This is by far the best way of growing the moss rose here, very few gardens have these, and I find they are always much appreciated. The fifth bed is planted chiefly with pale pink and white tea, and tea hybrids ; this is the bed with the wire fence (now completely covered with Gloire Lorraine and Kaiserin Augusta Victoria roses) which closes in this division of the garden, and screens off a large brick pit I had made below the wall of the stanzone, on that side, in which our carnations are housed in cold weather. All these rose-beds are edged with small rough stones among which violets have been planted, forming a thick green border, and giving thousands of flowers for many months of the year. Immediately within them are various narcissus and jonquils, and the beds themselves are carpeted between the roses with pansies, sown in the autumn, and planted out in December. This autumn, finding that we had some yellow parrot tulips to spare, I planted them, with the purple Lord Beaconsfield pansies, in the first rose-bed, and hope for a good display in April.

The upper bed of these seven I kept for early double tulips. At the back of it against the low wall,

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was a hedge of "Cedrina" (sweet lemon-plant), and tall poles were inserted here, in order to fix wires, and carry them from one to the other, and then, across the court-yard, to the roof of the house. These are covered with roses, Fortune's Yellow, and Camelliana (the Italian name for the old white Lamarque), and Saffrano. The two last are the best winter flowering roses of the country. Fortune's Yellow is the earliest to flower, and in April this fence is a sheet of pink and gold. The only drawback to this rose is, that it does not bloom again in the autumn; but with so many that have a second flowering, that does not so much matter. Wherever there was a tree-trunk, or a pole available, it was clothed with honeysuckle or climbing roses, and our newest plantings have been of wistaria, which we now have on either side of the west borders, so as to form a pergola over the two rose hedges.

It must be understood that all this planting had to be done by degrees. For several years I had very little to spend on the garden, and had to go *adagio*. In gardening, as in everything else in life, one has to buy one's experience, and it is easy to see afterwards how much better many things might have been done. But, as regards the general laying out of the ground, I don't know that I could alter or improve much, if at all, on its present distribution. The ground is by no means ideal, but one has to do the best possible with the material at hand. If I could cut out the undergrowth of the old shrubbery, here and there, we might have lovely sowings of poppies, delphiniums, larkspurs,



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lupins, and such-like things, in true English fashion. But one must take the goods the gods provide, and to have the full liberty of all the beautiful park and garden and *podere*, out of which we get infinitely more enjoyment than their proprietor does, in addition to our own flower-patches, is a piece of good fortune for which we are duly thankful.

## *Chapter III*

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### *Italian Gardens Old and Modern*

*Mezzeria System General throughout Tuscany—  
Gardeners, Good, Bad, and Indifferent—  
The Climate of Tuscany*

“It is pleasant to have flowers growing in a garden. I make this remark because there have been many fine gardens without any flowers at all, in fact when the art of gardening reached its height, it took to despising its original material.”

“We moderns have flowers but no gardens.”

“Gardens have nothing to do with Nature, or not much.”

*Vernon Lee*

“Tidiness is one of the last gifts of civilization. We now pride ourselves on our order,—we forget how very recent an accomplishment it is.” — “*The Soul of a People.*” *H. Fielding*

Most of us have come under the spell of the charm of the old gardens in and about Rome, with their groves of cypress and ilex trees, their fountains and their statuary, all recalling the splendour of a bygone past,—delightful places in which to dream away the hot hours of the summer afternoons, to watch the sun slowly sinking, and flooding the desolate campagna with colour as it sets, or in which to sketch such favourite “bits” as we wish to have a memento of. But I doubt if it has ever occurred to any one to wish to possess—let us say, the garden of the Villa d’Este at Tivoli, or that of the Villa Lante near Viterbo, or, even the most fascinating of them all, the old garden on the Coelian, where St. Filippo Neri was wont to sit; and where to-day the villa to which it belongs is, during the greater part of the

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year, uninhabitable, owing to the malaria from the campagna below it.

None of these are gardens in the English sense of the word, a place in which to plant and cultivate the flowers we love best.

The lovely gardens of North Italy, along the shores of the lakes, approach much more nearly to our English ideal. The abundance of water in that district, joined to a climate much more temperate than that of Tuscany, make North Italy the real home of Italian gardening. And yet,—I do not know if any one else shares the feeling I always have in these beautiful spots, belonging now-a-days for the most part to small German royalties, that—they are show places, lovely to look at and to enjoy as part of a holiday tour, but somehow not places intended to be lived in. It is just the same feeling of a want of reality that comes over one at the Riviera in spring, when life is seen under a kind of artificial condition, which you keep expecting will suddenly dissolve and melt away, carrying with it the crowd of idle men and women, the *roba scarta* of the London season.

The well-ordered English garden, beloved of its owners, and cultivated by them and their forefathers for generations, is not to be met with in Italy.

One has to live some time in Italy before fully comprehending that, in making comparisons, these must not be drawn between things English and things Italian, but between English and Tuscan, or Roman, or Neapolitan, or North Italian, as the case may be. And when I say that a garden in the English sense

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of the word, and the gardening sentiment as it has existed for centuries in England, and of which the last thirty years has seen such an astonishing development, is not to be found here, I confine myself strictly to Tuscany.

A Tuscan garden is not a thing of beauty, or to be cultivated for pleasure; it is a commercial asset of more or less value to the owner according to the different grades of the *mezzaria* system on which it is worked.

In many large gardens the gardener is paid no wages, but is at liberty to make what he can by the sale of the plants and flowers it contains, only in that case it is stipulated that the owner's house is furnished with what is required, according to the Italian standard. Italians very much dislike our English habits of having plants, and especially of bringing cut flowers, into sitting-rooms, thinking them, particularly the latter, very unhealthy.

By far the greater part of the flowers grown for market are made up on a stiff wooden foundation of one or another shape, either for presentation on fête days, or for funeral decorations (when they are *de rigueur*), or for exportation.

The Vienna florists' shops are mostly supplied from Tuscany, particularly in the matter of laurel and bay leaves, for the foundations of funeral wreaths. The stripping of the trees that goes on here for this purpose is something that would not be credited unless one had seen it. I have known the *Magnolia grandiflora* trees to be entirely stripped of their beau-

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tiful foliage, and standing bare and naked all the summer. These leaves are packed in large sacks and sent by rail to Vienna.

Another arrangement will be, that the gardener is paid a certain amount in wages, more or less, according as a house is provided for him or not, and in that case the usual arrangement is, that the owner and the gardener divide the profits on the sale of the flowers. This, of course, is just applying to the garden the system on which all, or nearly all, the farms in Tuscany are worked, for it is rare to find a contadino sufficiently well to do to be able to rent a farm on his own account. Some cheating in the settlement of accounts is inevitable, but not to such an extent as might be supposed, for a *computista* or accountant is employed who goes through these, at stated times, and who can tell to a nicety how many barrels of wine or of oil ought to be forthcoming. Of those unhappy *foresteri* who have bought land here, and attempted to manage it themselves, I hardly know one, among my own personal friends, who has found it possible to get a supply of vegetables for his own table, and who has not been thankful eventually to resign the charge of management into the hands of a professional *fattore*.

But to confine ourselves to garden arrangements. There is yet another set of conditions under which many of these are worked: the sale of flowers is agreed for, but not that of plants.

Where the gardener is allowed to sell both flowers and plants, good-bye may be said to any idea of pleas-

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ure in the garden, which then becomes only a market garden, "kept," up to the very door and windows of the house, in the most appalling state of mess and disorder.

In the case where no wages at all are paid, the landlord is bound to provide a certain amount of "plant," glass houses and fuel to work them, as the Tuscan winters are often bitterly cold, and unless means of forcing were liberally provided there would be nothing for the gardener to sell. Although labour of all kinds is as yet very cheap in Tuscany, gardening, properly carried out, is a somewhat expensive pursuit. Fuel is very costly, and many different kinds of earth are required: *castagna*, *scopa*, *terra bruga*, of all of which a supply must be provided every spring for re-potting. These are often brought from a great distance by very primitive "wild-men-of-the-woods" looking people. They generally try to persuade you that their price is precisely that which was asked, and which you paid, last year; but a reference to your account book will probably show that a considerable addition is now being made. But to do them justice, their trust in the English word is unbounded, and, although they can neither read nor write, if you point to the entry in the book, and say, "You see this is what I paid you last year," the little attempt at an addition is at once abandoned. I was taking the address one day, of one of these gentry, and asked, "Well, but is that all?" and the answer was, "If you put *Il Feroce* on the envelope every one will know whom the letter is for."

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No Tuscan will ever spend one franc for the purpose of making two francs, and the way the poor plants are starved is afflicting to see,—pots only half full of earth, and that of a very poor quality.

The subsoil here is always a mystery, but, as a rule, it is safe to assume that it is bad, and one constantly sees fruit trees and fine old ornamental firs that have struck something fatal at the roots, slowly decaying till they are cut down.

It is extremely difficult to get a Tuscan gardener who has been accustomed to selling, to be content to forego the practice, even if his wages are on a scale to afford him a larger profit as well as the advantage of being a certainty. I have known several instances here of foreigners who have bought properties and have endeavoured to keep the garden entirely for home use, but who have been obliged to revert to the old system of the country.

It will therefore be easily understood, that the well-ordered English garden is a thing not to be achieved here in Tuscany. One may reproduce it with a certain amount of success, as I believe we ourselves have done; but I would almost say that if you wish to *enjoy* your garden in Italy, you must suffer the ghost of your English "standard" to sleep. By *enjoy*, I mean possessing your soul in patience, and not crying for the moon. And you will, also, very soon discover, as I did, that any little knowledge you may have appertaining to garden matters in England is absolutely useless here in Tuscany, where all the conditions of soil and climate and methods are so entirely different.

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There is no more industrious, hard-working, or better class of men to be found anywhere than among the nurserymen of Florence. They get very little local encouragement, and the greater part of their trade is done in exportation ; for Tuscany is considered the great market-garden of Italy. But there is very little knowledge and less science. If I grumble to my gardener when I find a plant dead, he is quite surprised at the unreasonableness of my complaint.

"I planted it Signora," he will reply. "Is it *my* fault if the plant died? Am *I* the good God to make it live? Have we not all got to die?" If I represent to him that his *raison d'être* is to keep the plants alive, and that I pay him for that purpose, he goes away deeply aggrieved, and no doubt thinks these *forestieri*, and this Signora in particular, most unreasonable.

I have always found the gardener's place the most difficult of all to fill, in the domestic economy. Perhaps, out of all the candidates, the only man that seems to you at all suitable, is one whose home is miles away, and that at once constitutes an insuperable difficulty. In this country storms get up so suddenly, that it is essential the gardener should be within call, or at least, at no great distance. Then it is customary for him to do a good many little things about the house, of a morning ; and a man may be fit for garden work, but not suited for this kind of service. And to get honesty in domestic service, is, as Italians themselves all tell you, so difficult, that if you get that, you must be prepared to sacrifice other desiderata. After our first gardener

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departed, I decided that, having now got all the preliminary hard work done, I would only have a man three days a week. The first one I had in this way came out of a good gardening family, and was capable enough, but an utter scamp. I gave him some packets of seeds one morning, just before his dinner hour, and when I went into the garden after lunch, he came to me with about half of them in his hand, and said that when he returned from his dinner these were all he could find. I pointed out that we had counted over these packets together, and that he was responsible for them, whereupon he said the whole place was so open, any one could come in and take things away. I rejoined that it was curious that the person who had abstracted the missing packets, should have known exactly which were the best and most expensive sorts, and that if they were not forthcoming I should be under the painful necessity of deducting the amount they had cost from his wages, which I did. The lesson was not forgotten.

For several years I was, practically, my own gardener, with a man or a boy to assist. An English friend with a property in our neighbourhood had a good head-gardener, who generally had two or three apprentices, and often had one to recommend. Of course the drawback was, that as the youth "got on," he wanted a settled place. I remember arranging, with the father of one of these, terms and conditions of service. The son, a great strapping fellow, stood by, and raised no objections whatever. Next morning he presented himself and set to work. When I went out into

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the garden he came to me and informed me that, if I did not at once agree to pay him so much more than the sum agreed upon, he was capable of taking up every pot in the place and throwing it out in the road. This was agreeable for a beginning. I thought it prudent to temporize, and said, if he would finish the job on which he was then engaged, I would consider the matter. I returned in about an hour and asked why he had not objected to the terms offered when he heard me arranging them with his father. He replied that respect for his progenitor had kept him silent. "Well," I said, "please come this way," and I adroitly got him down the courtyard, and out at the gate, which I immediately closed behind him, and recommended him to return home, adding that he need not again present himself on my premises.

Another of these youths came one morning to say that henceforth he meant only to serve the queen of England, and must depart at once. It was the first spring that Her Majesty was staying in the neighbourhood of Florence, and some extra hands were required temporarily at the Villa Palmiere.

Another, an excellent young gardener, who was with me for some time, heard of a good permanent place in the south of Italy, and, to secure it, had to go in the very middle of some work we were doing. Later on he returned to Tuscany, and I would gladly have taken him back, but by that time I had a permanent gardener of my own. It is very strange that these young Tuscans never seem to thrive out of their own province. I have seen so many go away,

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and return in a few years with their health greatly impaired.

Those who go from the mountain districts, down to the Maremma, to work during the summer months, probably keep well while they are there ; but as soon as they return to the keen, dry air of the mountains, the effect of it is to develop the malarial fever that has been dormant in their system. In cases of consumption it is the same thing. Where it is latent in the system, there is no more sure way to develop it than to bring the patient to this keen, piercing Tuscan air. I have known this frequently happen in the case of English people, who might have been considered delicate, but in regard to whom there had been no suspicion of consumption. The climate of Tuscany is one that stimulates without bracing, and requires long and frequent absences from it, if one wishes to preserve the constitution unimpaired. It is a most uncertain climate, with variations quite as great as those of England, only, as Italians say, always in *esagerazione*. It is always an extreme, be it of heat, cold, drought, or rain, as is expressed by the Italian proverb, " *Ni in freddo, ni in caldo, siamo in cielo.*" And the people have the same characteristic, — unbalanced in the highest degree, and it is extremely difficult for a foreigner to deal with them until, after some years of experience, he begins to understand the different types, and to discriminate between them. There is no training of children in any rank of life, and it is really not until a young fellow goes to his military service that he gets some idea of discipline. There is

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no better servant than a youth just returned from his military service ; it is the one education of the country. When I look back and think of the way the garden and I struggled on, always making a little headway, it does seem to me extraordinary that it should ever have developed at all.

In the late eighties, family matters recalled us to England, and we were absent for a year and a half, and again, in 1891, for fully six months. When we returned on this last occasion, the place was in such a state that I was thoroughly disheartened, and seriously thought of giving it over into the hands of someone who would supply us with flowers, and make what he could out of it. But by this time I had gone to very considerable expense with regard to it. We had had a number of frames made, which I was allowed to stand on the sunny side of the big park, and after the stanzone came into my hands, finding it was a kind of cemetery for plants in the winter, I entirely remodelled it, putting in a glazed window to the west, taking down the tiles from the roof in two places, and glazing the vacant spaces, doing away with the lumbering old doors that suggested a convict prison as they swung to and fro, and making two neat, small beds at each side of the new doors, which were on a wooden frame inside and slid backwards and forwards into place, and were fastened at night by a padlock. These beds had nice stone edgings, and we planted creepers in them to cover the stanzone roof. After all this trouble and outlay, the Junior Partner protested loudly against any scuttling policy. So I decided

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to engage a permanent gardener, but before doing so, again had everything put to rights so far as could be done, knowing well how fatal it would be to any future prospect of law and order if things were not in a good state when handed over.

The man I engaged was a powerful young fellow, and he, too, came of a good gardening family. His brother had charge of the rose-grafting department in one of the leading Florence nurseries. His home was only about a mile distant from us, and I found him very honest and industrious, and with a fair amount of knowledge. He was with me two years, during which time I had raised his wages, and he was just about to be married when, to my great regret, I found I should have to make another change, in consequence of his conduct during a short absence I made in the autumn of his second year, when he conceived the happy idea of adding to his income—in view of his approaching marriage—by taking on other gardens and totally neglecting mine.

That is the bedrock on which one so often lands in this country,—the absolute untrustworthiness of the people with whom you have to deal! The Tuscan saying is that “you must begin with suspicion, and go on with suspicion.” The beginning is legitimate enough, it is the “going on” that is so very painful and that brings so many *forestieri* to the frame of mind when one shrugs one’s shoulders and says, “Che vuole?—what else would you expect?”

And sympathy here is always—Irish-like—with the criminal, and never with you, the aggrieved and in-

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jured employer. I was thought a monster of cruelty on this occasion for turning the man away, though he had left standing out in torrents of rain all our seed pans and boxes, containing all our autumn sown seeds, rather than trouble himself to put them into the frames, securely under glass. I returned home two days after the storm that had literally washed the earth and seeds out of their seed pans, to find the garden that I had left six weeks before in perfect order, a wilderness.

I felt specially aggrieved on this occasion, having lent my house to some Italians, to whom I knew it would be a great boon during the hot months, and had hoped that their presence would be a certain check on any irregular proceedings, and that they would let me know by letter if anything was amiss. I should know better now than to expect anything of the kind.

I had recourse to one of my many nursery-garden friends and begged him to try and get me a suitable and trustworthy man. As I had the prospect of spending part of the approaching winter in Rome, it was important to me to put a reliable man in charge. Just then, a gardener, who had been trained in this establishment, and had gone from there to another part of Italy, was free, and, as he seemed a capable man, I engaged him. His name was Dante Bacci, and he had many good points, with the great drawback of a physical infirmity that totally incapacitated him for any hard work, such as digging, or moving the heavy *conche* that twice a year have to shift their quarters.

He could easily have been cured by a few weeks of hospital treatment, but no persuasions would in-

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duce him to go to the hospital. Tuscans have an absolute horror of going into a Florentine hospital, and consider their doom as sealed if they do. Whether this is a well-founded belief or not, I cannot say; but I do know that many of the regulations of these hospitals appear to us very extraordinary, particularly in matters of feeding, and the way in which the patients' friends are allowed to convey to them supplies of food and wine.

However, Bacci was so capable as to his sowings and cuttings and in finer gardening work, that I preferred to keep him and get occasional help when heavy jobs were on hand. Like many of his countrymen he had an eye for colour and effect, and thoroughly understood displaying his choicest productions to the best effect in the court-yard. He was also a man of many airs and graces, and English friends, when visiting us, used to expatiate on the beauty of his bows and the elegance of his morning salutations. "Where," they would say, "would you find an English gardener take off his hat and make you a bow like that?" I thought how much I should prefer the sturdy self-respecting Saxon salutation!

The garden developed a great deal under his care, and it was quite time I had efficient help, for when one reaches a certain "backwater" stage, going down on your knees on gravel walks or stones does not accord well with rheumatic joints. I never have seen such fine petunias as this man grew, and he had an excellent hand for grafting.

I began with him at a great disadvantage, for, at

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the time he came to us, I had arranged to spend the best part of the winter in Rome, and it is never wise to leave a new hand without supervision, as he is sure to resent your "interference" on your return. However, I found the place in good order when we came back in spring, when I had of course to make it clear to him that my wishes had to be respected and my orders obeyed. I somehow managed to inspire him with considerable affection, and, as the servants said, "Bacci would do anything for the Signora."

But I had had too many lessons on the futility of placing confidence in agreeable "ways" to be able to go away again for any length of time with an easy mind, and when, in the early summer of 1895, I found we were likely to be in England for eight months, I was thankful when my Absentee said he would come and "mind the house for me." On our return he told me he had studied this man's character very closely and found him a curious type, and that he believed it was an absolute necessity to him to have some one with him at his work, a child, or even a bird, would answer the purpose, but a companion of some sort he must have. To my great regret, Bacci found himself obliged by family circumstances to return to the nursery at Siena, when he had been three years with me. His wife, who was a Sienesi, had the offer, from the Commune there, of a post which was too good to be refused. As the nursery where he had worked was glad to take him back at the same salary he had from me, the family income was more than doubled.

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A young gardener with a nine years' character succeeded him. He came from a first-class garden belonging to a wealthy German baron, whose head gardener spoke in the highest terms of him, and at the regret he felt at having to let him go; but there had been quarrels between him and another workman, and the German baron had decided that, under these circumstances, it was better that both should go.

This youth, who was about twenty-seven, had been accustomed to precisely the kind of house work we required from our gardener in the morning, as well as to changing the plants in the sitting-rooms, when he went about in a civilized pair of house shoes, and did not import a barrow-load of earth all over the carpets. Apropos, I was up at the big villa one day, and saw some curious-looking foliage plants adorning a flower stand. On taking up my glass to inspect them more closely, I found, to my horror, that they were products of the "Grand Magasin du Louvre," and on asking the secretary the reason for this new departure, he replied that they were most advantageous, looked quite as well as the real article, stood for months, and obviated the necessity of the gardeners tramping over the numerous valuable old Persian carpets and rugs, with which the rooms were strewn! Some of the latter had cost some hundreds of pounds apiece, and would have been better bestowed on the walls, but these were already filled with tapestries and pictures.

To return to my sheep, by name Angiolino, a more suitable selection did not seem possible, as, on his

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promotion, a young well-trained servant is generally the ideal article; and so I think he would have proved; but alas! I had not reckoned on female influence. I was aware that he was *fidanzato*, and an engagement generally gives a young man a motive for sticking to his work and "getting on," but I did not know that he was heartily tired of the "object" and had taken up with another woman, and this it was that brought him to grief and ruined his very promising career.

It was autumn when he came to us; and in the following spring he came to me one day, and said that there was a good deal of cutting and pruning to be done; that a young friend of his, the son of a contadino in his own neighbourhood, was just then out of work, he would be very glad to come and help him, if I would allow him, and there should be no additional expense. I gave the desired permission, and the friend, a nice-looking boy and very willing, worked for about a month in the garden. Easter was close at hand; and a friend from England who had come out to spend it with us, brought me a nice lot of rooted chrysanthemum cuttings. I handed them over to Angiolino on the morning of Holy Thursday, telling him that, if plunged in damp earth, they would not hurt if potting were delayed till next day, and that I knew he would want to go to the churches, adding that he never seemed to take a holiday off, on his own account. The man went round to the kitchen that evening and repeated my words to the servants and departed, saying, the "Signora had been *so* kind." We never saw him again.

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Next day, Good Friday, when he did not appear as usual, I concluded that, as he had not availed himself of the permission to go to the churches on the Thursday, he was taking the holiday that day instead. Good Friday in Roman Catholic countries is not nearly so important as the Thursday preceding it, when it is *de rigueur* to visit seven churches, and when the "dressing of the sepulchre," in the country districts, is one of the most picturesque sights in Italy. I saw this and the carrying of the dead Christ round the town, at Assisi, more than thirty-three years ago, and both were most impressive and characteristic ceremonies.

As Angiolino's friend had come as usual, his absence did not signify; but when Saturday came and he did not appear, I felt certain something was amiss. The substitute professed to know nothing of him, and all the little chrysanthemums, which had been left in beautiful order, were waiting to be potted, as I did not care to let this boy touch them. After lunch I was told that a contadino wished to see me, and I found it was Angiolino's father, in great trouble about his son, and come to see if he was with us.

It appeared that on the previous morning he had left at his usual hour to come to my house (he lived at a great distance from us), but had returned at ten o'clock, saying that his *padrona* had given him a holiday, had put on his best clothes and gone out for the day. He had not returned, and they were in great anxiety about him. It subsequently transpired that he had gone off, not with the lawful *fidanzata*, but

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with her supplanter. I do not know if his family have ever seen him since, but some two years after he thus decamped they had had only a dateless letter from him, to say he was alive and well.

I regret to say we found that he had taken with him a watch belonging to one of the servants, and had left an accumulation of debts at the village near us, and, what I did not know till later, had abstracted a sum of money I had entrusted to him to hand to my wood-merchant. I had been suddenly called to Rome, to friends who were in great trouble, and having written to the wood-merchant to call for the money due to him, did not wish him to have a fruitless journey, and had left it for him with the gardener. On my return I should, of course, have asked for the receipt, but I was so worn out with grief and fatigue, that I had to go to bed for some days, and entirely forgot the matter. That was quite the most curious and unpleasant experience of its kind that I have ever had, and when I betook myself to the residence of the German baron, and informed Angiolino's sponsor of what had occurred, he at first flatly declined to believe my tale of woe. One quite understands the great reluctance felt by people of all ranks and classes in Tuscany ever to recommend, for, as they say, if they do so, the object "disgraces" them. Great pity was felt for this young man's father and family, who were most honest, hard-working people.

I was thus left, just at the beginning of the busy spring season, to find another gardener,—visitors in the house, and others in prospect. The youth whom

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Angiolino had imported was some years younger than he, and had had very little experience of garden work, having been only employed as a general "help" in a florist's establishment; but he seemed to me of a good disposition, and honest and industrious. So I thought I would give him a trial. To this day I have never been able to decide whether his having been brought to my house as he was, was a "plant" between him and Angiolino or not; on the whole, I incline to think it was. It would be quite in the Tuscan order of things that Angiolino should have disclosed his plans to his friend, and said, "You come and help me for a month, and I will show you all the ways and the dodges, and then, if you please the Signora, perhaps she'll give you a trial, and after that, you must look to yourself." They are a most intricate people, in spite of a certain child-like simplicity of demeanour, which, however, is on the surface only.

This boy, Eugenio, has now been nearly four years with me, and has developed into a very fair gardener. Like other people, he has his good and bad points, but, on the whole, the former preponderate. I have so far found him absolutely honest and straight in money matters, extremely industrious and hard-working, of a most obliging disposition, and, what is to me of supreme importance, he is very devoted to our pets.

His weak point is a certain tendency to shelter himself from unpleasant consequences by telling lies. I make the same rule in the garden, that we have always done indoors, in regard to accidents and breakages: viz., that if these are at once frankly confessed,

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reproof will be of the mildest description; but, that if I am left to discover these and kindred misfortunes, things will be made decidedly unpleasant for the culprit. It is very difficult to induce the Tuscan mind to live up to this standard of frankness, and on several occasions, Eugenio's deficiencies in the art of speaking the truth have brought him into dire disgrace. The rule that if I discover any special plants dying or dead, he is obliged to replace them (with reasonable limits) has proved most salutary. On two occasions during his incumbency I have been obliged to call in the assistance of parental authority, and a most decent-looking old contadino has appeared on the scene, with the happiest results. On the last of these occasions I was detailing his iniquities with some warmth, when the old man nodded his head gently, and said "Dear Signora, leave the boy to me. His mother and I will have a little conversation with him when he comes home next Sunday, and you will see he will be all right." I could not help wondering if these arguments would be enforced with any applications of a weightier description.

This boy is the youngest of a large family, and has never done his military service, according to the rule that, when three brothers have served, the fourth is exempt, as is also the only son of a widow. Privately I have a sneaking affection for Eugenio, who though only a kind of grown-up child, has really profited by his opportunities in a way that does credit to his intelligence, and who takes great pride in his small domain. For myself, I never go into any garden,

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private or public, large or small, without learning something; it may be only a negative something of what is to be avoided, but more generally there is a leaf of good to be taken out of your neighbour's book. But this is an attitude of spirit not understood by the average Tuscan peasant, who is either so conceited that he fancies all he does is perfection, or too unobservant to bestow any thoughts on other people's ways.

When I spoke in the beginning of this very prosaic chapter, of the necessity of getting rid of all your English knowledge of gardening matters, I meant that times and seasons being so absolutely different in the two countries, the routine of garden work differs in toto. Thus, for some years, I held to the English practice of striking chrysanthemum cuttings in the late autumn, and having the plants in their flowering pots and staked by July, as one would at home. The result was that they were weedy, drawn-up things long before the first of November, by which date one expects to have them in flower. Now, partly from inability to do so much in the garden, I leave them entirely to Eugenio, who has had the sense to profit by his friendship with a very good grower of these, and the results are much more satisfactory. The cuttings are taken much later; in January, or even early in February, they are shifted on, just as they would be at home; but in June they are cut back absolutely to the earth, one or two brown twigs sticking up out of each pot; and any one looking at the rows of some two hundred or three hun-

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dred apparently empty pots, would be puzzled to know what they were supposed to contain. But a little foliage soon begins to appear, in the end of July they are moved into their flowering pots, and by the end of August present a most flourishing appearance.

They are one of the flowers that best repay cultivation here, but Italians detest them for two reasons. The first is, that, as a nurseryman said to me one day, "when you have re-potted your camellias and azaleas and plants of that class, you may leave them alone, only for the watering. But with these (the chrysanthemums), you must be after them all the time." This is quite true. The other reason is, that they are called the "flowers of the dead," coming into bloom as they do, just at *Ognissanti*, the first of November, when every available bud and blossom is requisitioned for funeral wreaths to be carried to the cemeteries. On a fine first of November, and for many succeeding days, the roads leading to the cemeteries are one moving mass of flower-laden people. Our house is situated on a high road, leading to one of the largest cemeteries in Tuscany, and for about a week, from the first to the eighth of November, there is a distinct hum of voices all day long. The poorest people manage to have their little offering, if it is only a small bunch of flowers; and all along the roads, booths and tables are stationed, with wreaths piled up on them to tempt the passers-by. I remember once when I was buying some plants from a neighbouring gardener, and asked if I could have some particularly fine pot plants

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that were not for sale: "No, signora!" said the old man, "I can't give you those; they are for my old master's grave, and I am going to place them on it at *Ognissanti*." The master had been dead for many years, but the gardener was most faithful in his attachment to his memory. This feeling is so general that I am always nervous about the safety of our chrysanthemums during that week, and like, if possible, to get them into their quarters in the court-yard, rather than leave them down in the garden, perilously near the low wall that separates us from the highroad.

*Ognissanti* is, to my mind, a beautiful festa, and one that I always miss much if I am in England then, where there may, or may not be, a dull church service, but where there is none of the outward demonstration of feeling that links us on with those who have gone before. The weather is often very fine then, and though *Ognissanti* used to be the date fixed by immemorable custom for getting all the big lemon plants and other tender things into their winter quarters, it is often possible to defer this for a week or fortnight later. In our own case, with our very inadequate provision for winter shelter, I am always glad to keep the plants out as long as possible, and to get them out in spring as early as may be.

There is considerable rivalry now-a-days among the Anglo-Italian gardening folk in the matter of chrysanthemum growing. Last year I was absent in England for eight months, not returning till the spring, and so missed my own small show, but I heard it was very creditable to Eugenio, who takes

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a deep interest in these plants, and whom I suspect of harbouring the idea of exhibiting in the near future.

The Tuscan nomenclature is very pretty. Oleanders are "mazzi di San Giuseppe," so called because they are generally in flower by that saint's day in June; Guelder roses are known as "Pallone di Maggio"; syringa is called "Pazienza"; and balsams are "bei uomini di Parigi." There is a little white annual, of which I do not remember the English name, but it is called here "mughetti di Parigi," i. e. French lilies of the valley, and the white snowberry is "Job's tears." *Rhus Cotrinus* is called "nebbia" (cloud).

Till I lived in Tuscany, I never realized how very essential *air* is to plants. Looking back to my English gardening days, I don't seem to remember ever having heard success or failure so much attributed to this matter of *air*, both as to quality and quantity, as it is here. Tuscans are most critical as to the quality of air; you constantly hear the expression *aria fine*, i. e. rare, fine, as we should say. As I get older myself, I am sensible of being much more dependent on air, in fact I sometimes think the feeling of want of air to breathe amounts to a disease. We are rarely indoors without our windows open all the twenty-four hours, but that amount does not satisfy my necessities, and I am conscious all the time of the wish to be in the open air, and I constantly hear the same thing of the plants. Carnations in particular will simply not thrive, except at a certain elevation. I was one day in a Florence nursery, belonging to a gardener whose specialty is raising creepers of all sorts, and

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seeing some very fine carnations, I said to him, "S., did you grow these?"

"Oh dear no, Signora, I could not grow them down here; a contadino from up above brings them to me every week."

The regulation plan in Tuscany for pots of carnations (they are always grown in pots, never in the ground, and treated as annuals) is on the top of a wall. Two years ago, Eugenio pointed out to me that our only chance with these, was to keep them during the summer and autumn months on the northwest side of the garden, but that the wall there being rounded, was useless as a shelf for the pots. Accordingly, I had iron stanchions driven in, so as to support a movable wooden staging, capable of taking sixty pots along the top of the wall; and this year the plants look thriving enough, though far inferior to those of some of my friends who live in higher and more breezy situations.

*Pecorino* is the standard manure for these in Tuscany. It is sheep's droppings brought down from the mountains, and administered as liquid manure every second or third day, before the flowering season. This year there has been a disease among the carnations, and many growers have lost their entire stock of young plants. They never propagate them here by layers as we do, but either by cuttings or from seed. The cuttings are taken off from the old plants in early spring, and grown on till June, when they should be nice, strong, well-established young plants, ready to be put in their big flowering pots, four or five to a

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pot. They begin to flower in October, and if you are fortunate enough to have a sunny and sheltered situation for them, you may count on flowers all through the winter. But at their best, carnations grown in Tuscany can never compare with those from Nice, or Genoa, or Venice,—these last are superb. Coffee grounds are an excellent stimulant for carnations. An artist friend of mine at Venice, who was a very successful raiser of them, told me he attributed their fine flowering to the share they had of his morning cup of coffee! I always enjoin the men who sweep our chimneys to save the small quantity of soot afforded by the wood fires, and give it to the gardener; but it is very difficult to persuade a Tuscan gardener that soot is a desirable adjunct to carnation comfort.

Neatly raked beds are an unknown quantity in Tuscany. The gardener digs the ground, turns over the clods of earth, more or less big, and leaves them so! Now unraked beds I will not have, any more than I will have weeds in beds, or in gravel walks, or suckers of roses left to destroy the roots of the plants. It seems ridiculous to mention such elementary things as these, but I have been a good many years driving them into people's heads. I always say to the gardener, you may, or may not, have success in growing good plants, but neatness and order in the garden are my first requisites, and these it is within your power to achieve. And the smaller the garden is, the greater the necessity for having it in a decent and orderly state.

The great feature of my small garden is the won-

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derful beauty of its setting. If the views on the park side to the east and south are fine, those on our garden side to the west and north, are indescribably beautiful. As I have before mentioned, owing to the slight fall of the ground, there is no indication that the wall that bounds it gives on to the high road. On the other side of this road is a large olive yard, with here and there a tree of faintest green, interspersed among the grey olives. This olive plantation is backed by a belt of cypress trees forming a curve, and seeming at last to touch the lower slopes of Monte Morello, the great weather-gauge of the district. Beyond these cypresses, to the northwest, are noble plantings of stone-pines, almost giving one the sensation of Rome, and here and there a friendly, weather-stained roof peeps out from among the woods, for this is a thriving, populous countryside, the very garden-land of Tuscany.

Looking to the southwest, away beyond the cypress belt, the wonderful green plain through which the Arno winds its slow way to the Pisan coast, shines and shimmers, never the same in any two hours of the day. In some lights you see it as pale green grass, in others it somehow has the effect of being itself the sea; it is bounded by a ridge of pale blue Apennines, and, in the far distance, the Carrara peaks tower in their grand isolation, veiled in mist during the greater part of the day, but beautifully clear and distinct at sunset, and sometimes also in the early morning light, when a pearly tint is over the whole landscape.

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A view like this redeems what would otherwise be a rather commonplace patch of ground of the suburban order, and transforms it into a kind of entrance porch to the great temple of Nature lying beyond. And, sometimes, lying in the deck-chair in the fresh cool air of an Italian summer morning, and watching the lights and shadows as they come and go over all this wonderful beauty, one asks oneself: "Was there any use in making a garden at all?"

## *Chapter IV*

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### *Tuscan Servants*

*General Household Arrangements in Country Life  
in Tuscany — Inconvenience of the Numerous  
Feste of the Church — Frugality of Living  
among Tuscans — English Standards of Food  
— Present Day English Fads*

“The time has come, the Walrus said,  
To talk of many things,  
Of shoes and ships and sealing-wax,  
Of cabbages and kings ;  
And why the sea is boiling hot,  
And whether pigs have wings.”  
*“Alice in Wonderland.” Lewis Carroll*

I REMEMBER a Hungarian once saying to us, that the domestic service of Florence was so bad that it would finally drive him out of the place, and I believe it did. And I do not wonder that the majority of British families who winter in the city of Dante prefer to avail themselves of either hotel or pension accommodation, rather than face a daily struggle for life with local domestics, especially with those of the order of the *Cordon Bleu*.

Much of this prevailing demoralization must be attributed to the fact that Florence is a “winter city.” The wealthy foreigner who visits the place for two or three months, in quest of sunshine *lungo l’Arno*, and who resolves on keeping house during that period, engages domestics, especially his *chef*, at exorbitant wages, and the custom has produced very complex and evil

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consequences among permanent foreign residents, as well as among the domestics themselves.

As the leading idea of the Florentine of the lower class is to *far il signore*, and do as little work as possible, he grasps at the golden opportunity of this winter service, quite regardless of the many months during which he must, at best, content himself with odd jobs at restaurants, or occasional engagements at mountain or sea-side summer resorts. Consequently, there is permanently a disorganized and rather lawless class of servants on the look out, with nothing to lose, and a possibility of something to gain. As a rule, servants in Tuscany are engaged in a happy-go-lucky fashion. In the absence of more responsible informants, one naturally applies to one's tradespeople, who evince considerable unwillingness to assume the responsibility of recommending servants, as their conduct so frequently reflects discredit on those by whom they have been befriended. Tuscans are the most republican of people, consequently "I am as good as you" is the prevailing standpoint from which the *servitore* regard their employers.

In spite of a legal fiction that fifteen days' notice is obligatory on both sides, your domestics consider themselves at liberty to leave the house at a day's notice, and any attempt to interfere with the liberty of the subject in this respect results in such smashing and crashing, accompanied by such "blasts of execration," that, as a rule, the householder is thankful to allow them to depart, and puts up with any temporary inconvenience rather than seek any legal redress. But these observa-

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tions are meant to apply only to a certain well-known class of servants that is accustomed to drift about from one temporary foreign service to another, and that no English resident in Tuscany would ever think of taking into his house.

Apart from these wandering, and somewhat lawless tribes, is the large class of Tuscan residential servants, who have many good qualities to recommend them; but I never can understand the way in which English people are apt to extol their merits, to the disparagement of those of the same class at home. However, I am often told that, having lived so long out of England, I am not a fair judge of the present relations there between employers and employed, and that, were I to return to England and take up house-keeping again, I would find all the conditions of domestic service much more difficult than they used to be.

This may be so. I only know that, in former years, I never had the slightest difficulty in "getting on" with my English servants in establishments both fairly large and very small, and that in a period of forty-three years I had only five personal attendants, by whom I was always served with the utmost devotion. I am bound to say that all these five servants were Scotch. English servants do not, as a rule, bear transplanting. Scotch people have more adaptability, and more easily find compensations in the interest and novelty of foreign surroundings. I was once obliged to get a maid hurriedly, and at the last moment before leaving England, owing to the person engaged breaking down in health.

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She was an Englishwoman, and at the end of six months I was thankful to get rid of her.

Of these five Scotch maids, I have lost sight of only one, and that from force of circumstances. Another of the group, an old family servant who travelled with me for twenty-two years over a good portion of the globe, though now long past eighty, still addresses me in her letters as "Dear and Honoured Lady" (never again, I fear, will such terms be applied to me), and never speaks of "your children," but always uses the possessive pronoun "our" in speaking of the two people whom she fondly imagines to be beings apart from, and superior to, the rest of creation. The other three remain tried and trusted friends; they know that they can count on our help and good will in any little difficulty, and I feel I can depend on them for the same.

From what I hear, I imagine this is an unusual record, and I attribute its success in great measure to the fact that I am very careful in selecting a servant to consider the question of suitability, on which, after all, every arrangement in life, from matrimony downwards, depends, and also that, when I am taking the character of a servant from her last employer, I always ask to be told her defects and weak points of character. I lay great stress on informing myself as to these, having lived long enough not to expect perfection in any one, and it saves much friction when one knows where the weak point is, as treading on small corns can then be avoided.

In taking the responsibility of inducing a young

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woman to leave her home and friends, and to go to a foreign country with a total stranger like myself, I naturally want to be very clear as to her capabilities. When living abroad, one wants a good all-round servant, and, as no one is proficient in every branch, and it is easy to supplement from some outside quarter any particular kind of work in which she may be defective, I lay much greater stress on certain points of character than on "smartness." To me the first requisite is the straight road of the *vraie vérité* — that is indispensable; and with the very best of Tuscan servants I never would dream of having one of them in my own room as my own personal and confidential attendant. The Tuscan has the inherent quality of telling you, not what is true but what he thinks will be agreeable to you to hear. I know many people who consider this a most amiable and delightful trait, but it is one that I never could bring myself to appreciate. And, in many ways, to have a good, trustworthy person at the head of affairs in a foreign household is a good check on the others, and gives a certain tone to its arrangements throughout, besides being an unspeakable comfort in case of illness.

In no country is it more necessary, when engaging servants, to consider the question of suitability than in Tuscany, where types differ so much, and the individuality is so strongly marked. It is a long time before one becomes sufficiently familiar with these types to be able to select just the right person. You get no assistance in this matter of selection from the applicants themselves, who, one and all, are so happily

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endowed with a conviction of their own capacity for achieving anything and everything that is proposed, that the burden of deciding how far this estimate is likely to be justified falls entirely upon you. This element of "cocksureness" speedily gives way, and is apt to be followed by a reaction of unreasoning depression, during which the candidate generally resigns, fully convinced of the unreasonableness of the *forestieri's* standard, and the impossibility of ever attaining to it. It is vain to remind her how carefully the duties were detailed to her, and how unfortunate it is for you, the aggrieved employer, that she did not more justly estimate her own incompetence, whereby another change is inflicted on you; and, in the meantime, some other candidate, whom you now wish you had preferred, has probably found a situation, and is beyond your reach.

Tuscan servants are most confused in giving any account of their previous services, and jumble everything together in such fashion, that it requires time and patience to unravel their story. Sometimes they are most original in their references. On one occasion, a woman, after detailing all her past situations, assured the Junior Partner that, though the name of her late employer had escaped her recollection, it would be discovered by referring to tomb number ninety in the Protestant cemetery; and she seemed to think that this very odd "reference" would quite establish the credibility of her tale. It is the only time that we have ever been referred to a tombstone, so to say, for a character.

It is only within this generation that it has become customary for Italian women to go into service at

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all. Thirty years ago, in Tuscany, only the men had any kind of training for that vocation ; and there is no better servant than a middle-aged well-trained Tuscan, who has probably spent most of his life in one foreign family. But these treasures are not to be found every day, and there are few Anglo-Italian residents who can not recall some frightful domestic fracas, probably originating in jealousy, and ending in knives, and in the *guardie* having to be called in. This demon of jealousy is the bane of your domestic service ; if you bestow the smallest commendation on any one member of the *famiglia*, as they call themselves, for some extra well-done performance, each of the others considers himself defrauded by just that amount of praise.

Nowadays it is quite possible to find women servants with a fair amount of training, both in kitchen and in housework ; a wonderful amount, I should say, considering that our civilization is absolutely foreign to all their notions and up-bringing. In England, when the daughter of your gardener or your coachman enters your house as an underservant, she only takes a few steps on the upward ladder of civilization. Your teacups and your pots and pans may be of a quality superior to those she has been accustomed to see in daily use, but, *au fond*, they are the same articles, and she has imbibed traditions from her mother and her grandmother that have prepared her for the larger sphere of your house. But the Tuscan girl, who is most likely to make the better servant, has had no such background, and has probably

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lived in a hovel in the mountains ; and if you get a foundation of honesty, good temper and good will, you may be thankful. If to these are added some power of observation and of assimilating your ideas, you may consider yourself a very fortunate person. What you will *not* find, speaking generally, is the quality of precision ; the want of which is the great national defect, and it is conspicuous by its absence from every rank and grade and profession throughout the country. On five consecutive occasions, your superior chef will send you some dish prepared from one of your own recipes, and done to such perfection that you confidently order it for your next lunch or dinner-party, when it will, as likely as not, come to table in an uneatable condition. The genius that is founded on painstaking is rarer here than elsewhere, and the rule of thumb prevails.

On the other hand, if you were to announce any morning to your household that you were going to give a ball that night, no one would grumble or consider the shortness of the notice given in any way unreasonable ; everyone would work with a will and with the utmost joy, in fact be quite delighted with the general topsyturviness of the situation. But one and all would feel it quite unreasonable that after this spurt they should be asked to perform anything like regular work for at least three weeks to come.

Of the honesty of Tuscan servants I have no sort of complaint to make ; of course the *gros sou* that in most countries cooks consider themselves entitled to goes without saying, but I have never found eatables

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touched ; spoonfuls of foreign wines left in decanters, and small fragments of cakes and sweets left on the sideboard, will reappear in the most provoking way, unless most explicit directions for their removal are given ; and if some little delicacy leaves your dinner-table, it will surely to be served up again if you are not careful to desire that it be used inside. I can only speak of people as I have found them. But then in England I have never had to say of my servants, as I hear some of my acquaintances doing : " *Of course* they open and read all your letters," or " *Of course* the servants take care that *they* have all the best peaches." I cannot imagine life under these reciprocal conditions, nor could I live without the assurance that those about me were as desirous of securing my comfort as I am to see that their restrictions and limitations are maintained on just and considerate lines.

I used to think that the best class of servants here would be found in good Italian families. But I found in this idea I was quite mistaken. In the big *palazzi* it is customary to employ a retinue of servants at very small wages, and with very light work, in fact, for three or four hours of the day. The women servants in such houses go about in a kind of slipper-down-at-the-heel costume ; and in these large houses the servants know that in the end they will be pensioned off, so that they rarely change. I remember once trying this type, and on the morning following the entry of the new comer, she was found wandering about the passages with her bundle under her arm, in a state bordering on distraction. " Let me go,

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only let me get out of this house " was the burden of her cry,—the detail of the British *ménage* had completely overpowered her, and it was not at all surprising.

I often think of what the last of those five Scotch maids, whom we called the penultimate, said to me one day: she was one of a large family, and there were few things in which she was not proficient—an excellent cook, as well as a good milliner and dressmaker, a voice that made her reading or singing a pleasure to hear, and a head capable of writing a business letter if your eyes or your faculties were temporarily disabled. "My mother," she said, "used always to tell me that one good manager was worth seven good workers." Just think what an education such a precept implies, and how few of us there are in any rank of life who are fortunate enough to receive such a training.

Leaving the retainers of the big Italian houses on one side, it will be found much more satisfactory to engage some one who has attended to the humble requirements of some British spinster as a *bonne à tout faire*; and if, having been accustomed only to single-handed service, she can get over the difficulty of keeping the peace with her fellow-servants, you will probably find that she is not afraid of hard work. Indeed, the only way to ensure tranquillity in a house is to keep the servants rather over than under-worked. This sounds inhuman, but there are ways of making up to them in the matter of occasional outings and holidays for a rather heavy daily routine.

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"Sunday evenings out," that bugbear of the London householder, are unknown, as no respectable Tuscan woman of any age would be seen out-of-doors after dark alone, or without one of her man-kind to see to her safety.

The numerous feast days enjoined by the church are a terrible interruption to any regular work, though they affect the out-door department more than the house service. No matter what important piece of work may be going on, or on what you may have reckoned being finished at the end of the week, if you hear the fatal words, "Signora, you have forgotten that to-morrow is *festa*," you may sigh and resign yourself. No self-respecting Tuscan would so far demean himself and the saints as to do a stroke of work after twelve o'clock; and in the case of the saint being of so exalted a degree as to require a whole day of idleness devoted to his memory, the boundary line will be ten o'clock. Indoors, of course, the saints have to "accommodate themselves" to the requirements of the *forestieri*. Much depends on the religious views of your servants for the time being: the contadino who washes your clothes will probably bring them home a day earlier, rather than encroach on a holiday; if you have a professional ironer from outside, she certainly will request you to change her day for that week, and if your own servants are in the habit of ironing, they may, or may not, object to doing it.

I once had a most provoking woman who had lived with some English Romanist converts. She was

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desperately afraid of being over-worked and always objected, on principle of course, to ironing on a *festa*. I made some enquiries, and finding that in the priests' houses the usual work, including this branch of industry, was carried on as usual, I told her so. This woman made a great profession of religion, but was so overbearing in her demeanour both towards myself and her fellow servants, that one day I preached her a regular sermon on the desirability of her precepts and her practice being more in conformity with one another ; she heard me in silence, and when I had finished she said calmly, "Kiss me, Signora, and we'll say no more about it!" I gave the matter up as a bad job; but she became too impossible, and I had to discharge her.

Since the new order of things was established in Italy, these *feste* have been greatly curtailed, but there are still sufficient of them to be a great nuisance and hindrance to work.

Speaking of the saints reminds me of a friend who, one morning, heard from her open bedroom window a little conversation going on between her parlour maid and the baker, who was urging the girl to something—probably to testify that double the actual quantity of bread taken had been left ; the girl's replied : "It's no use my telling the Signora any more lies, she is just like the saints, and believes nothing." The old lady who was thus "evened"—to the saints — had never, notwithstanding a long residence in Tuscany, mastered much of the *lingua toscana*, and her favourite exclamation when she wished to convey that

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something appeared to her wildly improbable, was “*Che ri-di-co-Lo!*”—with a fine British accent on the concluding syllable.

I do think people might make some effort towards knowing a little of the language of a country before travelling in it. Standing at San Miniato one day, and pointing out to some friends who were visiting us some of the places of interest seen from the church terrace, I was accosted by a smartly dressed London-looking woman hung with silver ornaments, who said that as I seemed to know the district she would be grateful if I could inform her if a place called “Ak-kit-ry” was anywhere in that neighbourhood. I told her I was quite ignorant of such a name; some explanations followed, and the name of the villa she wished to visit and of the owners thereof supplied the clue. “Ak-kit-ry” was the British rendering for Arcetri. How she had arrived at this wonderful corruption remains a mystery.

Living in a glass house in the matter of languages, I ought not to make severe allusions to the errors of others. The Absentee, who has a gift of tongues which cannot be traced to “heredity,” avers that my Italian makes him shudder, and enables him to comprehend the sufferings that his own false quantities in Latin must have inflicted on the present Master of Trinity, in old Harrow days. When I point out that whatever my accent may be, I make myself “understood of the people,” he replies that it is so, and that it is very wonderful that they do understand me, and that it shows the high degree of Tuscan intelligence.

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There is one feature of country life in Tuscany that is rather afflictive to methodical people. I don't quite know why, or how it comes about, but all the morning you seem to be liable to a perpetual stream of small interruptions, and it frequently happens that the hour of *déjeuner* arrives, and nothing has been done of all that you had planned out, and it is often not till the evening, after dinner, that you feel free to sit down with a sense of peace and quiet to your books. Even then you are recalled to domestic fray about ten-thirty, for, owing to the early hour at which the cook must start for market, all orders must be given over-night. The Junior Partner takes the burden of all this fray on her own small shoulders, and, in fact, may be said to be qualifying as a second little sister of St. Peter. If any one who is not familiar with that legend reads this, I recommend it to him.

Tuscan servants have two bad habits that I am surprised are allowed to go unchecked, even in the "first families" of English people: one is the horrid trick of throwing dirty water out of the windows; this, incredible as it sounds, is a custom that still prevails. In old days, in the streets of Florence, you might suddenly find yourself deluged with slops of a much more objectionable kind than dirty water. The other habit, almost as unpardonable, is that if a visitor rings the door-bell, and the padroni are out, the servant whose duty it is "to answer the bell" will, probably, after the visitor has rung several times, leisurely open an adjoining window and sing out, "Chi è?" ("who's there?") Both these practices are on the index of my

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humble dwelling, and I am extremely angry if I find them indulged in.

Part of the Tuscan organization is that servants will never take the smallest responsibility about anything in your absence. I do not mean to say that if the house were on fire they would not do their best to put it out. When I was last in England, I received a letter from the gardener saying that the water was done, and what was he to do? Of course I replied instantly, that he was to do as he had done before, and employ the same contadino who had served us before to bring what was required. But it was not agreeable to think of one's plants parched and dry before my reply could arrive, and I thought the question superfluous. They are always desperately afraid of incurring any expense on your account, and are exactly like children, very good when acting under direction, but with no idea of the initiative. I know there are people who prefer this type of domestic. I have, myself, a preference for having thought taken, especially in absence.

The matter of absence from home is one of very great difficulty in Tuscany, or rather I should say, it is difficult to know what to do with your servants when you are absent. So many unpleasant incidents have cropped up when the household has been left to its own devices, that many people now prefer to send their silver to the bank, shut up their house and let their domestics retire to their respective families. This is all very well when there are no "creatures" to be cared for, but, in the case of a beast-loving people like ourselves, the complication is very great.

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Turning servants adrift, especially during the summer months when there is no probability of their finding other employment, has always appeared to me a most unjustifiable proceeding, and it is only natural that servants, employed by foreign residents during the winter and spring months, and then discharged without the smallest thought on the part of the employer as to how they are to live till the autumn season comes round again, should seek to make what they can, while they can.

In Tuscany a good man-cook can generally find employment without difficulty at any of the bathing places or summer mountain resorts, provided he is told in time that you will not require him during the summer; but in this case it seems only fair, if you wish or expect him to return to you, to pay him his wages, in whole or in part, for the months during which you leave him at liberty. For the first few years of our residence in Tuscany we kept a male cook, but in several instances we found a man very troublesome, and gave him up in favour of a woman, as being more peaceable, if less proficient. But when one lives in the country the difficulties that attend having a woman-cook are quite as great, though of a different kind;—if she is elderly and respectable, she is probably not able to endure the fatigue of going to and fro to market, and if she is young and strong and perhaps nice looking, you cannot better ensure her respectability being of short duration than by sending her to and fro to market; so we have again relapsed to the male gender. In old days in Tuscany, cooks in-

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variably carried their marketing home tied up in a large handkerchief: no self-respecting Tuscan, male or female, would ever be seen with a basket of any sort or kind; these handkerchiefs were of the most brilliant and gaudy colorings and huge designs, and had a very picturesque effect. But with advancing civilization, baskets are no longer in such disfavour, and are now quite commonly in use.

I have dwelt very fully on all these sorts and conditions of domestic service in Tuscany, and have not yet even alluded to the crowning obstacle connected with it, and that is, that by far the greater number of servants are married people, and in the case of many, they want to go home at night. If you once accede to that arrangement, you may bid good-bye to any prospect of comfort in your own dwelling.

One point in which I think we may with great advantage take a lesson from Tuscans is in the extreme frugality and simplicity of life among them.

Labour is badly paid, and people of all classes live by a standard at which an English mechanic would turn up his nose. A gardener, or a day labourer, will as a rule bring with him the material for his midday meal, and it will consist of dry bread, washed down by a little thin red wine made of the refuse of the grape-skins watered over after all the good juice has been extracted; it is really only coloured water. It is called *acquarella*. He will probably have a hot supper of beans, salt fish prepared in any one of a variety of horrible ways, *pasta*, perhaps a little stew of meat and vegetables,—and, of course, the good, nourishing soup which is universal.

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But till the evening, the dry bread is, as a rule, his only support. In our early days here, it used to make me so unhappy to think that, while I was eating my own comfortable lunch, the wretched gardener was devouring his dry bread, that I instituted sending out to him a plate of some kind of viands from the servants' dinner. But with experience I found it better to leave this matter alone,— somehow it did not answer,—and I caught one man going to the cook and giving his orders that the *plat* should be a savoury and an abundant one! What was given as a kindness came to be imperiously demanded as a right. So I contented myself with a rule that on Saturdays the gardener should come and dine with the servants : it has always been a busy day, with many little odd jobs in the way of changing plants and fresh-cut flowers and so on, and it was very convenient to have him at hand ; and some years ago, when I had reason to think that the man we had then was inclined to take more wine than was good for him, I started having a good cup of tea with a slice of bread and butter sent out to him at five o'clock in the stanzone. Italians are very fond of tea, and in many houses it is taking the place of black coffee after meals. Of course to the poorer classes it is quite beyond reach, but they will take it thankfully as a *tisane* in cases of slight indisposition, and no more acceptable present can be offered than a small packet of it.

Apart from his meals, a Tuscan will very rarely accept the offer of a glass of wine. If he comes on a message or any other little matter of business, he would

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feel it very unwholesome to drink a tumbler of red wine apart from his food, so, if you wish to offer a civility, it is better to provide a small glass of Marsala and a biscuit, which will be felt as a distinction, and gratefully accepted.

The extremes of heat and cold in Tuscany necessitate a regular "turn up" of the house twice a year : in early summer, when all carpets, thick curtains, blankets, and woolen goods of every description have to be taken up, beaten, and carefully sewn up in canvas wrappers, after having been well powdered with either camphor or naphthaline, and again in autumn, when they have to be replaced before the cold weather sets in. During the hot weather from May to October, a house cannot be too bare of hangings of every description, as they only harbour dust and mosquitoes, but the brick floors that are universal make the very thickest of carpets desirable in winter.

In all good town apartments, and in the best class of country villas, the brick floors are covered with a *scagliola* cement made of marble chippings set in mortar, in designs of different colour, and forming a beautiful flooring. These are cleaned, as are the ordinary brick floors often to be found in old country houses, with a little oil and *segatura*, the saw-dust from the carpenters' shops. There is a red substance called *cinabresse*, which some servants are very fond of applying to the brick floors ; it gives them a brilliant scarlet tint, but is most destructive to dresses, and very injurious to pet cats and dogs, as it comes off on their paws, and in licking it off they are apt to

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contract illness. I never allow it to be used in our own house.

No woodwork can resist the extremes of heat and cold that prevail here, and heavy curtains in winter are most necessary. Upholsterers abound, and drive a flourishing trade. It is desirable to employ one of the very best of these, as so much of the wear of carpets depends on the way they are beaten and folded.

A modern writer on English gardens has, in several of his books, hazarded the opinion that his women-kind would miss many of the conveniences and comforts of English life in an Italian villa. I daresay they would in the comfortless kind of shanties that are generally let out to foreigners coming to Tuscany for the winter season. Since these books were written, their author has had the opportunity of experiencing the amenities of life in several Tuscan villas, and has probably enlarged his views of their possibilities, as I believe he has announced his intention of never again patronising Florence hotels, but only of visiting in villas. Whether the opportunity will again be afforded him of enjoying the hospitality of his former hosts is not quite clear.

I am sometimes told that, in my warm, comfortable rooms, when the thick curtains are drawn, the lamps lit and bright wood fires blazing, "we seem to have crossed the Channel."

My house is distinctly a contadino house, and not a "villa," and nothing provokes me more than when people wishing, I suppose, to be civil, speak or write of "your beautiful villa." A villa it is not, and never

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will be ; and a contadino house, perhaps of a somewhat superior order, it will remain, while in my occupation. But, notwithstanding this, I never feel that any substantial comfort is missing from the surroundings, and one great blessing, in disguise, which has been secured to us by the simplicity of its arrangements, is the total absence of drainage. Probably this sounds very dreadful to English ears, but the results justify the assertion. There are two cesspools outside the house, into which all house sewage passes. The gardener empties these, alternately, once a week. Their contents are returned to the land at an early hour of the morning, when no one is about, and it is very rarely indeed that any unpleasant trace of this manuring is perceived. This system is general throughout Tuscany, and all farms are manured in this way. I must allow that during the month of September, when this work is carried on more vigorously than at any other season, driving about the country roads and lanes is not exactly bliss, but few *forestieri* are about then, and I never heard of any evil results following this universal custom.

I do not think that, when meals are served, it would occur to anyone that my kitchen possessed neither "range" nor boiler,—not even an oven ! nothing but the little *fornelli* of the country, over which you may see the cook standing, straw fan in hand, fanning up the *carbone* embers. There is a *forno di campagna* (a small portable oven, worked with hot embers on top), but : as it only holds a very limited number of dishes, things requiring to be fired in an oven have to be

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arranged for. This, at all events, has the advantage of obviating any chance of ever suffering from "two pastries." A friend of ours was once informed reprovingly, by her children's German governess, that *sbe* never ate two pastries, in answer to an offer of apple tart that followed hard on a meat pie (my friend's cook must have sadly lacked both judgment and imagination). Had I foreseen I was to live so many years in the house, I would probably have done more in the kitchen department, in the way of "modern conveniences," but it is wonderful how well the natives of a country will work with the tools to which they have always been accustomed, and it is very annoying to lay out money on structural alterations in another person's house.

The question of *carbone* (charcoal) and what should be the legitimate consumption thereof is a large bone of contention between English padroni and Tuscan cooks. I know that a franc a day is considered a fair sum to allow for this article, when ironing is done at home, and when at least two hot baths daily have to be provided; many cooks will say they require two francs a day, in which case, unless the number in the family is very large, you may be sure the cook is in league with the *carbonaio*, and gets a heavy percentage from him. My own view is that when we are alone two *quintali*, — that is, two hundred *kili* a month, which represents a sum of sixteen lire if you live in the country, — is a sufficient quantity for a household of five persons, including servants; but if you are within the *dazio* boundaries (*octroi*), there will be two francs

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more to pay. But you will not get a cook to acquiesce in this limitation, unless you keep *at him* on the subject, and unless he really is very careful. Every time you wash your hands, every drop of water has to be heated, and with afternoon tea following hard on "washing up," the *fornelli* are hardly ever out, as they would be for long hours in an Italian household. Of course when we have friends visiting us, the quantity has to be proportionately increased.

To say that any foreign service ever arrives at the perfection and finish of the best English service would be absurd. Our domestic service is one of the things that most impress foreigners visiting England for the first time. And there is no greater trial to English people, when a change of fortune necessitates retrenchments in all directions, than having to accept an altogether different class of servants from that to which they have been accustomed. But it must be remembered that the wages of many English butlers would just about represent the income of an Italian professor, or well-paid official. It is when you come to the lower order of English servants and compare them with Tuscans, that you find the comparison is not altogether to the disadvantage of the latter. There is much refinement of nature in Tuscans, and a very quick perception of what order their employers belong to. A Tuscan is rarely vulgar, and the most scathing criticism he can pass on his social superiors is to say of them that they are *senza educazione*. By which he does not in the least mean that the person in question is ignorant of

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the "three rs," but that he is deficient in the qualities of mind and character which, as we would put it, go to make up a "gentleman" or a "lady."

During our summer absences from home, I have sometimes lent my house, and sometimes let it, preferring to have it occupied in one or the other way, as many difficulties and complications are avoided.

On one of these occasions I was showing the kitchen premises to a tenant; we passed quickly through them, but in these few minutes my cook, a country girl who could neither read nor write, had summed up the situation and turned to the Scotch maid with the remark, "Molto ordinaria" ("very common indeed"). The person in question was the wife of an English chaplain, who, on taking up her new position, had professed her intention of "knowing only the best people." The word "best" is capable of many different applications, and I do not know how this person would have classified the Carpenter's Son. As to the Apostles, I am certain they would not have been invited to dinner.

There is an extraordinary security of life and property in Tuscany; it is said that if any one goes to the police with a complaint against his neighbour, the police begin to enquire into *his* antecedents rather than into those of the person complained of. Once, when our hall door was being painted and varnished, we removed it from its hinges and slept for three nights with no door at all, and within a few hundred yards of a frequented highroad. Certainly there were the watch dogs about, the big white Maremma sheep-

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dogs, that are tied up by day and let out at night to roam the parks and gardens. No Tuscan will willingly face one of these, and some friends in a neighbouring villa, who had long been absent from it, found themselves, one night on returning late from the opera, unable to walk up their own avenue, on account of their own watch-dogs prowling about! The pair at our landlord's villa, of course, know us perfectly, and are always most friendly, but they are a savage and treacherous breed, and I confess I always address them in the most persuasive tones, if I meet them of an evening in the avenue.

To return to matters of daily household interest, I do think we English are rather barbarous in the matter of food and feeding and in many little matters of table appointment.

Having now no house of my own in England, when I go over there I am generally visiting about in a great variety of houses, large and small, and I have various small standards of my own by which I can generally tell what things will be like in the way of comfort. I am not now speaking of the five thousand pounds a year establishment, in which the immortal Becky thought virtue and elegance would be so easy of achievement,—that sum, by the way, would be a drop in the bucket to the present day South African capitalists of Park Lane,—but in much humbler abodes than these, if there are nice little dinner rolls on the table, and small supplies of toast within easy reach, I know that the meal, though it may be simple and inexpensive, will probably be one that has had some

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thought expended on it. But if by each plate there is a hunch of that terrible article, English "household bread," my spirits sink. And there are now, in London at least, so many good foreign bakers that there is no excuse for this small detail of comfort not being attended to. And I will go further, and say that, in place of ordering one roll for each person and a surplus of two in reserve, as I have often seen, it would not ruin anyone to provide, let us say, a dozen rolls for six people. An occasional change of bread is a very acceptable thing, and only implies a little trouble in giving orders to the cook or tradesman. The very best of food is ruined if it has to be eaten off cold or tepid plates. Many London servants have a horrid custom of leaving the breakfast-cloth on the table till luncheon, by which means it is plentifully sprinkled with "blacks" and never looks fit to be seen. Of a Monday, in nineteen houses out of twenty, the first dish presented at luncheon is the cold remains of the previous day's regulation sirloin of beef, often presented without even so much as a salad to take off the sensation of eating raw meat. In all these little matters, I think Tuscan customs are more civilized. There is not, of course, the elaborate English breakfast to take up a cook's time of a morning, and his or her energies are therefore left more free to work out the midday repast. Generally a cup of tea or coffee with toast or rolls suffices,—personally I never eat butter and am therefore spared many trials in travelling, but that is an idiosyncracy,—and I expect a good plateful of whatever fruit happens to be in season at the time, to ac-

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company the tea and toast. This refection is generally served to each member of the family at the time and place that best suits him. In winter, mine is served in my bedroom, and in my garden in the summer, and I never wish to see my best friend till I have had that cup of tea,—my “human best,” that is, for the gentleman known in this house as “dearest dear” always keeps me company at that hour, winter and summer; and in the former season has a digestive snooze on my eiderdown.

At twelve-thirty, *déjeuner* is served,—the linen, the silver, the glass, are all in irreproachable condition, and my Tuscan *cameriera*, in a neat black gown, with the smartest of cap and apron “fixings,” would think herself disgraced if her padrona’s table were not tastefully arranged, and decked with little dishes of fruit; and the Junior Partner has sundry treasures of old Venetian convent glasses kept filled with fresh flowers. The *cameriera*’s smart appearance drew down upon her head one day, from a very evilly disposed man-servant who often has occasion to pass our gate, the scathing remark that any one would suppose she was in the service of a princess. She was quite equal to the occasion, and replied with great dignity that she would have him know that her padrona was far superior to any Italian princess. The first *plat* may be of eggs cooked in any one of a variety of ways, but rarely as omelets, which are not a Tuscan specialty; *frittata*, which is their substitute for an omelet, is not much to our taste. Or it may be fish very delicately fried, or a cup of chicken broth flavoured to a nicety,

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or one of the innumerable Italian *paste*, risotto, macaroni of all sorts and kinds, dressed with ricotta, or tomatoes, or cheese, according to the season. In Tuscan *palazzi*, where a large staff of servants is maintained and several cooks kept, these *paste* and maccaroni are all prepared at home by the head cook, Tuscans being very critical as to their quality. But in a small household where the cook has not even a *facchino* to wash up for him, it would not be fair to expect him to find time for such operations, and I have, therefore, always contented myself with the best quality of what can be purchased in the market. But in no case will that first dish consist of meat.

A dish of meat of one kind or another will follow,—never a large roast or anything heavy or *stodgy*,—and with this will come a green vegetable, properly cooked, and not tasting of the water in which it has been boiled, as frequently happens in England; there will also be potatoes,—not, I regret to say, “plain boiled,” because the Tuscan potato is not good enough to eat unless fried or mashed. Cheese, Gorgonzola or Roquefort, or delicate little cream cheeses that come down from North Italy, English biscuits, and a plentiful assortment of fresh fruits, finish a meal which, though so very simple, is satisfactory because every detail has been thought out.

“Five o’clock” tea with us is always somewhat of a meal, as dinner is rarely served before eight o’clock. The latter meal is limited to four courses, which is amply sufficient for an every-day home dinner. For the first of these four, soup is *de rigueur*; and here I

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must frankly avow that I greatly prefer the English to the foreign article of whatever nationality.

I know that this is against all popular canons of cookery. But when speaking of the superiority of English clear soup, I mean real, pure soup, free from all such abominations as Harvey and Worcester sauce, spoonfuls of Liebig, or clearings with whites of eggs,—such soup as I refer to must be prepared the day before it is wanted for use, and a few spoonfuls of it are a pick-me-up equal to a glass of Madeira. It is not every British cook who can rise to this, but in houses where good clear soup is a *sine qua non* it is arrived at. A French or Italian cook prepares his soup fresh daily, and a very good article of its kind it is, but it is made on a different system: the *lesso* or meat from which it is made is eaten by the servants as one of their dishes, and served to them garnished with vegetables. Once or twice in Italy I have seen really good clear soup prepared by a chef, but it is not an article in every-day use. In our own kitchen we achieve it satisfactorily, and also savouries which are not native to Italy, but which our cook is very glad to make from English recipes, of which, like most old housekeepers, I have an abundant stock; but, as I am not writing a treatise on cookery, I do not think it necessary to publish these recipes, and will only say that English cooks are very apt to be economical in the wrong place, and are spendthrifts in *meat* and misers in eggs. By that I don't allude to the awful article described in grocers' parlance as "cooking eggs." An egg that is not fit to eat at table is not fit

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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to cook with, and the same holds good of butter, fruit, etc. But it is a kind of article of faith with English cooks to use as few eggs as possible. Now good cooking cannot be achieved without a consumption of eggs such as few English people will entertain the idea or recognize the necessity of.

In a middle-class French family, say of eight people, twenty to twenty-four dozen eggs weekly would not be considered at all extravagant, and in my own modest ménage, a nice little luncheon, for say four persons, will probably require two dozen eggs in the four courses sent to table, and this without any wasteful or extravagant ideas on the part of the cook.

With regard to "raw material," you can get as good beef in Tuscany as in London, but you will not be likely to see it in hotels; as is always the case abroad, veal is much better than in England, owing to its being killed in a more rational manner. Lamb, by some curious dispensation of Providence, is in season four times a year, and is the cheapest of all meat foods. It is roasted with sprigs of rosemary, which may be highly poetical and old Grecian, but which, to my taste, imparts a most unpleasant flavour to the meat. Mutton is simply bad, the only exception being the small Lucca mutton which your butcher will procure for you during the winter months. Italians dislike mutton extremely. Poultry is very indifferent, unless you have ground to keep and fatten your own chickens. Turkeys are fairly good, as some attention is paid to their rearing, and they are not expensive. Game is always scarce, and in Tuscany its price is prohibitive; pheasants often

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fetching from eight to ten lire each. They come down from the North.

In Rome, game is abundant and very reasonable in price. Of course, the detestable custom of shooting all the small singing birds provides a plentiful supply of them. I never allow one to be brought into the house, and do what I can to din into the native mind the disgrace in which I hold it to kill the dear dicks.

I have made many good cooks in my day, but that time has gone by, and as, nowadays, I never even remember what I have had to eat two hours after a meal is finished, I should be much embarrassed if I had again to take up the rôle of observing all the new entrées of London dinner parties, where, in old days, my cook always expected the latest wrinkles, and where my social enjoyment was much interfered with by the knowledge of the questions my functionary would address to me on the morning following a dinner party.

A style of cookery I very much dislike, and which I believe is rather in vogue just now, being thought "smart" by *nouveaux riches*, is that which suggests much manipulation of the dishes presented for your consumption: things tortured out of their natural shape, and bedizened with fantastic little ornamentation, below which you often find some horrible layer or covering of what looks like fat or lard. In my own family I have always had to cater for people with very delicate digestions and small appetites, who required to be tempted to eat; the ordinary large English joint would have been useless, and I have, there-

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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fore, had to give considerable thought to the matter of how to present food sufficiently sustaining, in a form likely to be acceptable.

Personally I have no sympathy with "fads," vegetarian or other, and quite as little respect for medical theories as to diet, especially with those in connection with rheumatic gout, because I have lived long enough to see that the latter are just like the theories on Egyptian dynasties,—liable to be upset every few years by more recent discoveries. Fifty years ago, sufferers from rheumatic gout were kept by the doctors for weeks and months together on farinaceous foods. To-day I am told by the most advanced foreign scientists that farinaceous foods, bread included, are to be avoided like poison by sufferers from that complaint; and when, having heard a long list of comestibles struck off the roll, I meekly inquired on what food I was expected to support existence, I was told *meat, meat, and again meat*. This theory may be excellent for some persons. I can only say it does not suit me, and I don't believe in the healthfulness of a daily diet that goes against the grain.

There is no doubt that rheumatic gout, almost more than any other complaint, may to a great extent be kept in check by attention to diet, and each one must find out for himself what best suits him in the way of habitual diet. The old adage regarding the age at which this kind of knowledge might be supposed to have been acquired was forty; some of us are still young and foolish at forty, but if by fifty, still more at sixty, one has not discovered what

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diet their " machine " can most easily assimilate, I do not see how they can expect an outsider, as the best of doctors must be, to know it for them, especially as medical science is purely experimental. Without going so far as to endorse the famous old prescription of living on sixpence a day (having earned it), I think if doctors would, in prescribing for English patients, direct their attention more to quantity than to quality of diet, it would be very advantageous. I read lately of a dinner consumed by Lord Palmerston, when long past his seventieth year. The list of eatables amounted to the appalling number of fifteen platefuls of good, solid English food. The writer of the article had made a memorandum of them at the time, and added, I suppose half in apology, that very little wine was drunk. I should say these fifteen platefuls might have furnished material for three abundant dinners.

Many things can be taken with advantage and easily digested when eaten as single items; for instance, a good plateful of strawberries and cream form an excellent luncheon, if taken as the only addition to a little fish or a bit of cold chicken; whereas if eaten at the end of an over-abundant and late dinner, they will probably be the last straw to the already over-taxed digestion.

A foreign doctor shows much greater consideration for his patients' circumstances than does his English confrère, and does not order dozens of champagne, or journeys to the ends of the earth in search of baths, unless he knows that ways and means permit of these luxuries. When the latter desideratum is not possible,

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he will often devise a substitute, and give a prescription which, inserted in a bath of ordinary water, if not so efficacious as the desired mineral water with all its accompaniments of change of air and scene, is better than nothing, and has the merit of being attainable in one's own house, and without the fatigue of a long journey.

The appalling price of fruit and vegetables in London is a great affliction to us when we happen to go over to England. Last summer I read in the *Times* a long harangue in its best Jack Horner style, setting forth this so-called fact, that fruit was, to-day, to be had in London as cheaply as in any other part of the world. I should be glad to know where it can be bought there at any kind of reasonable price. At the co-operative stores, so far as I know them, it is quite as expensive as in the West End fruit-shops, and London street-barrows are not the most tempting places from which to collect supplies. If Covent Garden market is suggested, I may say, I probably know more of its ways than most people, as it was an old happy hunting-ground of mine in bye-gone years. If I happened to be in London in the month of September, when one generally has a little spare time, I have often gone down there of a Saturday morning before twelve o'clock, not so much for the sake of cheap purchases outside the "avenue," as of a chat with the Kent "growers," a most interesting class of people, with their cheeks like their own red apples, their quaint phrases, and their stray bunches of golden striped French marigolds, or the small Michaelmas

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daisy (*Ericoides*), grown by the acre for the Covent Garden market.

But if you buy fruit or vegetables within their boundaries, it must be by the "sieve" or the "half sieve," and for a small family that is rather a large order, to say nothing of the difficulty of carting these treasures home, and being assured by the ungrateful Junior Partner that you are disarranging the family larder, and that they will entail living on spinach and plum-tarts for a week to come. Oranges and lemons, I allow, can be purchased more cheaply in Sloane Street than in Tuscany; that is because there is so little *commercio* between one part of Italy and another, the railway charges and the *dazio* combining to make transit not worth the cost.

Lemon culture in Tuscany has been almost entirely abandoned by the contadini, owing to the severity of the winters and the expense of the manure they require. Some years ago I went into the question of having oranges sent up from Sicily (best of all), or even from the *contorni* of Naples, but I found the expense of carriage and *dazio* would be so great that I abandoned the idea. Pineapples are never seen in these parts, and bananas and plantains are neither good nor plentiful. But all native home-grown fruit,—strawberries, raspberries, plums of all sorts and kinds, pears and apples, figs, melons, peaches, grapes,—I think I am well within the mark when I say that the price of all these is less than one-third of what the same article would be in London, that is, so long as the particular fruit is in season. In September, you may eat muscatel

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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grapes costing fourpence a pound, but if you wanted a dish of these at Christmas for a luncheon or dinner party, I don't think you would get them for love or money.

The grape which is held in greatest esteem in Tuscany for table use is called the "Regina." It is a large-fruited grape, very long, pale green in colour, thick skinned, and with absolutely no flavour, but it keeps better than the muscatel, which is apt to be attacked by a small worm ; if one of these worms gets into the centre of a bunch, the whole bunch decays and is useless. There is a small black grape called *fravola* (strawberry), corrupted into *fragola*, with a peculiar flavour, which we think delicious, but which the natives do not appreciate, and consequently these grapes are the cheapest of all. I believe it is of American origin.

Tuscans are very liable to internal inflammation and stomachic complaints, and I am sure the prevalence of these is to be attributed to the Tuscan habit of eating fruit less than half ripe. There is a hard, yellow peach much liked by the natives. It never softens, even when thoroughly ripe. It has a high flavour and is excellent when cooked in tarts, but it does not appeal to English taste, and is, I am sure, very unwholesome when eaten as the Tuscans eat it, uncooked and soaked in red wine, which they think brings out the flavour. It is useless to commission your Tuscan cook, or any other servant, to buy fruit for you. Fruit is an article for which you must market for yourself; and you will often find the only fruit in the

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Arab sailors that tow your *dahabeah* up the Nile do their long day's work with only the addition of dry bread ; and the same mixture supports the brains of the Cairo bazaar sellers while they are wheedling you out of your English sovereigns. To be sure, you must have a small Arab machine for grinding this coffee, and also soft water wherewith to compound it.

Tuscan red wine, even if you get it unadulterated from private vineyards and of an age to be thoroughly fermented, does not agree with every one ; but there are other beverages, and, if English people would only believe it, half the illnesses from which they suffer in Italy, during their winter and spring tours, are caused by the reckless way in which, perhaps arriving hot and tired after a long railway journey, they fly to the bottles of stale and doubtful water in their hotel bedrooms, in which many deleterious substances lurk besides the "pure element" which a poor inebriate friend of mine used to assure us was the only thing she ever touched. Indeed the habit of perpetually requiring "drinks of water" at every hour of the day is a most injurious one, and I am glad to see that the subject has lately received a good deal of attention in the English papers. It is purely habit, and if you don't begin to imagine you are thirsty, you will soon forget all about it; and in the case of children it is a tendency that should never be allowed to form into habit.

In cases of illness, Tuscans largely use fresh lemonade, and there are few ailments in which it will not be found beneficial, but not where there is any chest or throat irritation. For bad colds they will drink it hot,

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as a specific, but I find it very disagreeable, and would rather, when a hot drink is essential, follow the advice once given me in Rome by an old doctor who, after knocking off most edibles, proceeded as follows: "I do not say *trink*, but, if you *will TRINK*, — TRINK whiskey."

My own particular and private fad in the dieting line is the drinking of a large tumbler of fresh lemonade every evening just before going to bed, and eating plenty of fresh fruit in the early morning, and I find this very simple prescription remedies many of the ills to which flesh is heir; but though this happens to suit me, I do not therefore suggest that it should suit other people. And in conclusion of the matter of fads, I think we should all try to avoid imposing our own particular fads on our neighbour. — Let us be vegetarians, teetotalers, fresh-air-ists, what you will, but let us not allow our friends to arrive to lunch on a cold winter day, perhaps after a long journey, and provide them with only little dishes of carrots and turnips to eat, nor expect them to enjoy eating with an open window at their backs, which fatal trap has probably been hidden from them by some intervening piece of furniture, but for the results of which exposure they will probably have occasion to remember and to bless you for many long weeks to come. And when a strange medico, utterly ignorant of your habits, family tendencies and background, and constitution generally, propounds the latest professional creed, let us smile sweetly and remember the injunction to "suffer fools gladly."

## *Chapter V*

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### *Treatment of Animals in Italy*

*The View Taken of this Matter, and also of the Lottery, by the Church—Our own Pets*

“The Lord shall save both man and beast.”

*Hebrew Psalm*

“He prayeth best who loveth best  
All things both great and small;  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all.”

*Coleridge*

“I have seen, with an infinitely sad disquietude, the souls of animals appear in the depths of their eyes suddenly, as sad as a human soul, and search for my soul with tenderness, supplication and terror, and I have felt a deeper pity for the souls of animals than I have for those of my brothers, because they were without speech, and incapable of coming forth from their semi-night.”

*Pierre Loti*

“There is in every animal’s eyes a dim image and gleam of humanity, a flash of strange light through which their life looks out and up to the great mystery of our command over them and claims the fellowship of the creature if not of the soul.”

*John Ruskin*

### A POEM IN HONOUR OF THE PERSIAN

“History still was writ B.C.,  
Rose there a town in Tuscany.

*I omit some five thousand stanzas here, but as they only treat of unimportant people like the Medici, Savonarola and others of like reputation, I come straight to our own time, where in*

*Eighteen hundred and ninety-three ;  
What is the picture now we see ?*





ALFREDO

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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Medicis dead ; republics down ;  
Foreigners all have left the town ;  
Pope behind the Vatican walls  
Fears lest priesthood, tottering, falls ;  
Man or woman, priest or king,  
Who is the ruler now to sing ?  
Ladies and gentlemen, it's a cat,  
Rude, perhaps, but a trifle fat.  
Cat with coat of gorgeous sheen,  
Cat with eyes of emerald green.  
‘ Emerald green ’ is somewhat strong,  
But courtiers can’t draw bows too long.  
Courtiers comb the coat of fur,  
Quite content with a gentle purr.  
Cat in a royal, stately way  
Sometimes stoops to a game of play ;  
Is pleas’d to hunt the royal tail, —  
Whisper it low, — sometimes to fail,  
For the royal waist, as said before,  
Is not so slim as it was of yore.  
Kings, the royalists do aver,  
By no manner of means can err.  
Did you ever hint to a noble dame  
Of sinful acts or deeds of shame,  
Such as a seat in a Sunday hat,  
Such as a theft of fish or fat ? —  
Treason high would the verdict be,  
Never again your face she’d see.  
Puissant Lord of the Feline Race,  
King is writ on your handsome face.  
Egyptian apis — Brahmin cow —  
Let them worship — let them bow ;



ALFREDO

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Ne'er a rival in all I see,  
Jack is the cat of cats for me.

Fare thee well, wherever you go,  
Signor Illustrissimo."

March, 1893.

A. A. D.

IT is not too much to say that the sight of the treatment meted out to horses, mules, and donkeys, in southern Europe, embitters the existence of English beast-loving people. And bad as is the persistent cruelty with which beasts of burden are treated in Tuscany, it is worse as you go farther south, and seems to culminate in and about Naples, in the Terra di Lavoro. I remember once remonstrating with a donkey driver at Sorrento, who had brought an animal for me to ride with a large raw on its poor back. The hotel waiter, who was assisting me to dismount, improved the occasion and exhorted the man to be more careful in future,—not of his beast, its feelings were of no consequence whatever, but "of the feelings of the *forestieri*,"—they who bring the gold into the *paesi*; they are the people whose whim in this matter is to be considered.

Living as we do here, in a very hilly district, I have only too many opportunities of seeing how the poor overladen cart-horses and mules, struggling all the time to draw their heavy loads, are thrashed unmercifully by their cruel drivers. Many a time I have gone out of the avenue gate on to the highroad, and begged for a little mercy to be shown, but I have come to the conclusion that such appeals only irritate,

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and so do more harm than good. It is perfectly heart-rending to see some of the passenger-carts, by which the workmen in the suburbs of Florence travel to and fro to their daily work, laden with from thirty to forty men, dragged at a gallop by one poor beast. Many of them start from the Porta Prato, and any afternoon, all the long summer through, this sickening spectacle is to be seen, the drivers shouting and yelling, and lashing up the poor skinny beasts.

Some years ago a letter appeared in the columns of *Truth* on the subject of the inhuman treatment of beasts of burden in Italy, and suggesting an appeal to the Pope, praying him to give directions to the priests, especially in the southern districts, to draw the attention of their people to the duty of kind and humane treatment of animals. The writer added that such a course would probably be much more effectual than all the efforts of the various "Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals" that have been started in Italy by foreigners. As I shared this view very strongly, I wrote to an English Roman convert friend, whom I knew to be intimate with many of the old Roman Catholic families in England, to see if their attention could be drawn to the subject.

My friend is quite as devoted to animals as I am, but her reply pointed out the uselessness of the course proposed.

"I should be only too glad, as you very rightly conjecture, to do anything in my power. I have always regarded the views held by most priests upon what they are pleased to call the 'lower creation' as

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an indelible blot upon the Roman Catholic Church. If there were dogs as legislators and priests, the world would be better in every sense. Man — being the creation of the sixth day, I suppose the gods were tired at the end of the week, for certainly he is the least good of all created things. — But it would need a much more powerful hand than mine to do as you suggest. I don't believe, under any circumstances, that such a course would be of the slightest use ; to have the least chance of success it would have to be undertaken by a very prominent and ultra Catholic, and one who gives largely to the Church. I give nothing to the Church and am scarcely considered a Catholic at all ! The Pope himself kills all the little birds in the Vatican gardens for his own table ! I should have thought a memorial to the King and Queen of Italy would have had more effect ; and, to get the matter taken up by the very large English and American colony that there is both in Rome and Florence, my name and an annual subscription you are most welcome to, if these would be of any use in the matter."

I do not agree with this view, for experience has taught me that movements of any philanthropic kind whatever, started by such outsiders as we *forestieri* are in Italy, have a poor chance of success. But it is another question whether such pressure could ever be brought to bear as would make the Vatican see the matter from the English point of view. How extremely improbable this is may be gathered from the following passage taken from a sermon on " Omnipotence in Bonds," by a writer whom I, like many others of my

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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generation, have been accustomed to revere — Cardinal Newman. He says :

“ You know, my brethren, we in our turn have no duties towards the brute creation, there is no relation of justice between them and us. Of course, we are bound not to treat them ill, for cruelty is an offence against that Holy Law which our Maker has written in our hearts, and is displeasing to Him. But they can claim nothing at our hands, they are absolutely delivered. We may use them, we may destroy them at our pleasure ; not for our wanton pleasure, but still for our own ends, for our own benefit or satisfaction, provided we can give a rational account of what we do.”

Precisely so. And the Tuscan peasant translates literally into his own dialect the Cardinal’s views, and adopts just so much of them (barring the fine subtle distinctions), as suits his book. When you remonstrate with him on his cruelty you are met at once with the stock phrase, “ What would you have? — to this end they were born — for this cause came they into the world — *lasciar stare* (let the matter alone).” When I read this utterance, I shut up the book, and from that day Newman and I parted company forever.

Listen to the view taken of this matter by the priests of another age and faith : —

“ Of all and every kind of sin which I have committed against Thy creatures, against dogs, birds, or any kind of animal, if I have offended against any of them, I repent with thoughts, words, and works, corporal as spiritual, earthly as heavenly, with these words, ‘ O Lord, pardon, I repent of sin.’ ”

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"Of all sins that I have committed against any creature of the field, if I have beaten it, tortured it, slain it wrongfully, if I have not given it fodder at the right time; if I have mutilated it, not protected it from the robber, the wolf and the wayfarer; if I have not protected it from extreme heat and cold, I repent in thought, word, and works. 'O Lord, pardon! I repent of sin.'"

So sayeth the "Zend Avesta."

In which of these widely differing views do we find more of the spirit of the teaching of Christ?—in that of the Roman cardinal, Englishman as he was, or of the Indian Buddhist priest?

I may be told that we English have no right to speak of the defects of our neighbours in this respect, seeing what appalling accounts of cruelties, not only to animals, but to human beings, helpless women and children, are published in every daily paper in England. But that is just where the whole difference comes in,—such things *are* published, they *are* punished. There is a standard of humanity, and the whole public sentiment in England is against those who outrage it.

Here in Tuscany there is none. When did any one ever hear of a prosecution for abuse of horses and mules being instituted by one Tuscan against another? The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals does its best on its very limited resources, and stations so many *guardia* at certain points of the streets and roads; what then? If a *guardia* were stationed at every twenty yards of highway, they are Tuscans: it does not strike them as remarkable that the cruel

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stick should fall, or the heavy nailed boots of the carter be taken off, and brought down, blow after blow, on the back of the unfortunate animal, struggling with a load far beyond its strength. I am not exaggerating, I speak of what I know and have seen. Such sights are unfortunately of daily occurrence, and any one walking the country roads in Tuscany can have ample proof of the truth of my statements.

Where the remedy is to come from, I do not know, unless, indeed, another St. Francis arises to plead for his brothers and sisters, the beasts and the birds. Until some kind of education can be instilled into the minds of the children, as to their duty in the treatment of dumb animals, it is hopeless to expect much improvement.

What the *forestieri* may do or say is not of much account. They are not Christians any more than the beasts are, and their views don't matter. I confess I am vindictive enough to hope and trust, as the young King of Italy said in his first speech from the throne, "with my whole strength and soul," that those who have so cruelly oppressed and tortured God's dumb creatures in this world, may in the next sphere change places with the creature, and be themselves the beasts of burden, that in some way in the future, it may be, so to say, made up to the animals for all they have suffered in this mortal life.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am unwilling to touch on so wide a subject as vivisection, but that the cruelties that are practised among us in the so-called interests of science should be tolerated by English law is a national disgrace, that gives a bitter sense of hypocrisy to all one's efforts towards inculcating a more humane treatment of God's creatures in the south of Europe.

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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The property on which we live belongs, not to an Italian, but to an Austrian, and no shooting of small birds is permitted. The blackbirds are with us all the year, and, in spring and early summer, the nightingales sing in a fashion that some light sleepers could dispense with, but which to me is a real joy, even if they do keep me awake. I never allow any small birds to be bought, cooked, or eaten in my own house; and when, as sometimes happens, they are sent as an offering from some of our humble neighbours, they are declined, with an intimation that it is contrary to our religion to kill and eat the little singing-birds; and when, in travelling, the dish containing the dear dicky-birds is passed round at the hotel table, I say what I can to make it clear that there is no use in providing such delicacies for our party. But I am not so foolish as to imagine that my words make much impression.

Looking at the whole peoples of Italy, we may say, without fear of contradiction, that the worst enemy of the Roman Church could bring no heavier indictment against her than the moral and spiritual condition of her people, and that the total absence of any inculcation of the duty of kindness to animals is one of the worst features of her teaching. It is not only in this matter that one sees the baleful effects of the teaching and training of the Roman Church, the most material in the world; indeed, in this, its native home, it is pure Paganism revived under another name, and as the tree is, so are its fruits. In England there is no better company on the highroad than an

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intelligent peasant. Travel in a third-class carriage, on the afternoon of a market day, in the west of England, and listen to the old women's chat, or talk to the man who is going your way on a Cornish road, or in a Westmoreland vale, or in the wilds of Ross-shire, and it will be odd if you do not learn something that you did not know before, or if you don't go on your way with a better opinion of your neighbours in different ranks of life than you had before. It is not so in Tuscany. Listen to any group of contadini, to any two friends discussing their small budget of news,—you will hear nothing but gossip of the most material sort,—“quattrini,” “soldi,” “il mangiare,”—the material wants of life, never an *idea* of any kind.

The lottery is the great curse of this country. Italians are born gamblers: the love of play seems to be in the very fibre of their being, and so long as the state lottery provides such an outlet for their gambling propensities, so long will they prefer to shirk their honest work, and spend any small savings on a lottery ticket giving the chance of a big prize which will enable them to *fare signori* for the rest of their days. If any little out-of-the way event occurs in your house, your Tuscan servants will fly to the “book of dreams,” look up the numbers connected with what has occurred, and place their money accordingly. Years ago my purse was stolen by, as I subsequently discovered, a person not accountable for his actions. So unusual an event naturally made a great commotion in my household. As the circumstances pointed to some one having entered my *sallotto* from the door

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leading into the garden, I informed the police of what had occurred, and the *carabiniere* were sent up to make enquiries. Immediately every soul on the property looked up in the "dream-book" all the words connected with the affair,—purse, *carabinieri*, etc., and put their money on the numbers corresponding to them. I believe I was the only person who did not make something out of the circumstance!

The origin of the lottery is very obscure, and it is astonishing how little information can be given about it by persons one would expect to be well informed on such a national institution. By some it is thought to date from the old Roman Empire, and others will tell you it was known in Egypt long before that time. In more recent times, when Italy was composed of a number of small republics, Genoa, Pisa, and so on, we find it established in each.

Mr. Story, writing in the old Papal days, speaks of it in his "*Roba di Roma*" with the strongest expressions of reprobation, as indeed any one would do who knew the corrupting influence it has on all classes of the community. Although three Popes, the Neapolitan Innocent III, the Roman Benedict XIII, and the Florentine Clement XII, successively proscribed it, it was soon revived, and in modern times has been mainly defended by the Jesuit organ, the *Civiltà Cattolica*. In the last days of the Papal government of Rome it was a branch of the department of finance, and was under the direction of a Monsignore.

It is greatly to be regretted that the Italian government should continue such a legalized and author-

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ized system of gambling, from which it derives a yearly income of eighteen million lire, taken, it must be remembered, chiefly from the very poorest of its subjects. But we must not forget that the *Governo* has been heir to many evils, and one may hope that with an improved system of agriculture, and development of the magnificent mineral and other resources of the country, better times will come, and more enlightened views will prevail, and that this *infezione*, as an old Italian writer calls it, will become matter of history only.

No account of our little Tuscan settlement would be complete without some mention of our own pets. If any one had told me, in my youth, that I would live dogless for fifteen years of my life, I would have laughed him or her to scorn. But to attempt to keep a good dog where we are would be a matter of the greatest anxiety. Even if the Maremmas did not make short work of him, he would, after being complained of all over the place, be poisoned, and much grief to ourselves, as well as friction with the powers that be, would ensue. So it has seemed wiser not to replace the beloved Skye, who died seventeen years ago in a green old age, and who was buried with all due honor in the garden of a kind German friend down in Cornwall, where we then happened to be. The Absentee said on that occasion, that his mother expected her friends to call to condole with her; and, indeed, there were few humans left whom I could not have better spared than that most faithful follower.

I think *the* great compensation of being an English

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duke would be in the way you could surround yourself with your beasts, happy in the knowledge that each one was housed and lived his life under just the best and happiest conditions. I have no love for a zoological garden, very necessary, no doubt, for scientific purposes, but where the creatures for the most part look so sad and so conscious of being in captivity. When I hear people say they "like animals in their proper place," I hope I am polite, but I do not want to have anything more to do with those people. Where *I* am is the proper place for my beast to be. Certainly we have not as yet come to the point of having a young donkey lying on the drawing-room sofa. I know a naval hero who goes that length,—an English admiral.

Our first animal here was an Italian cat, *Furbo* (rogue) by name. He was not beautiful, but possessed a great deal of character and intelligence; he would absent himself for weeks together, and during these absences I am certain he made believe to be some one else's cat. On his return from these excursions, the joyful cry would be heard from the servants' quarters, "Ecco Furbo!" and a plate of bones would be produced which would have taxed the teeth and capacity of a mastiff to devour; but Furbo would polish them off without difficulty, and if, after this banquet, he was presented with a good, deep bowl of hot milk, his joy was complete; after swallowing every drop, he would retire to a certain velvet armchair in the dining-room, known as Furbo's chair, with the air of a person who has nothing left to wish

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for. He would then subside into the ordinary routine of well-fed cat life, till—like Miss North in her botanical expeditions—the wandering fit came on again, and he “had to go.”

I am always careful when engaging servants to state that our beasts have to be treated like *noi altri* (we ourselves), and that any want of respect and consideration shown to them is never forgiven nor forgotten. In the autumn of 1889, Jack the Persian travelled out from England with the Junior Partner and a party of friends. I was detained by business for a couple of months, so was spared the trials of that journey, which no member of the party has ever forgotten. Nothing would induce Jack to occupy the comfortable basket thoughtfully provided for him, he was as good as gold so long as he was allowed to travel from lap to lap, but howled steadily when put into his basket. For twelve years this house may be said to have existed for the comfort of Jack. He is very handsome, especially in winter, when his big ruff and shirt give him the air of a large owl, and at all seasons his frilled knickerbockers are most fascinating, but his looks are nothing to his disposition, which is really unique. You may roll him up in a paper parcel and leave him to find his way out, or put Toby frills round his neck, and pull him about in any way you like,—he would rather any day be teased than not noticed.

I have had Persian cats before, and, as a rule, they are most uncertain in their tempers, and not above digging their claws viciously into your hands, but Jack has not a scratch in him, and would even stand aside

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and let another cat eat his dinner. He is a cat of most regular habits, begins the day with his portion of raw liver cut into tiny morsels, and this is repeated at lunch and dinner; for supper he will accept pigeon or chicken bones, but if the butcher has forgotten his liver, and you attempt to substitute these other delicacies, he looks deeply injured. I must say this does not often happen, for the butcher knows it is as much as our custom is worth if Jack is not attended to. Like his family he looks on the house as a place in which to eat his meals, and the instant these are finished he retires to his garden, out of which he rarely wanders all the spring and summer. In heavy rain he has many "comfy" retiring nooks and corners, from which he will emerge as dry as a bone just as we have begun to be anxious.

But when the winter cold sets in, Jack's affection for his family develops, and he honours us with a good deal more of his company,—it is not the fireside that he wants, it is the warmth of the human, and my sitting-room is often invaded by the Junior Partner, with the remark, "Jack wants to be nursed, I'm busy, will you have him?" There is a certain drawer in my writing-table which just holds him comfortably, and he will lie there, or on the top of the desk on which I am writing, for hours together. All our world knows Jack, and I have friends who, on entering the room, invariably make for him before they deign to bestow any salutation on me. On one of these visits, a tiny grandchild of one of these friends was led up to me to say good-bye in proper form by a correct-minded

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young mother, — “Now darling, say good-bye, and thank Mrs. — prettily.” The response came in a piping childish treble, “Addio, Mamma di Jack.”

When the night is very cold as well as wet, I often feel a cold nose poked through my mosquito netting, and after I have got up and rubbed him dry he will sneak into bed and snore happily on my pillow,— that is, as long as I am occupying the ground floor rooms, for he utterly declines to be where he cannot have free egress.

It was curious to see the way in which the old cat Furbo adopted his younger brother, so to say, when he first arrived, and stood up for him on all occasions when differences of opinion would arise among the stray visitors of the court-yard and Jack. He was a timid little thing in those days: it takes Persians some years before they arrive at their full strength and courage, but now, even in his toothless old age, I think he would hold his own against any intruder.

Three years ago, Jack, who had never had any but minor ailments, suddenly became very ill. What the cause was, it was difficult to say,— partly stoppage, but our doctor, who was breakfasting with us one morning in the garden, told the Junior Partner, whose particular property Jack is, that the colour of his nose betokened so ænemic a condition, he did not believe we would bring him round. We called in a vet— ah! beware of Tuscan vets—he ordered a certain Italian patent syrup. One dose of this was administered, but the day that I returned home from seeing my Absentee off for the distant part of the world

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where his gift of tongues was to be utilised for the good of his country, and found Jack in an apparently moribund condition, I began to feel as if the foundations of my world were giving way,— my two-legged Persian gone beyond recall, and the four-footed one at the last gasp. I sat with him in my arms really at the end of my courage. Eugenio came to me, and said impressively, “Listen to me, Signora: if you wish to kill Jack, you’ll go on giving him that medicine. I know what it is, for my father took two doses of it, and had to keep his bed for a month from its bad effects. Now, Signora, I have told you, and I have spoken, and you can do as you please.” We left off the patent syrup, and my kind Scotch maid administered little injections, now of olive oil, and now of nourishing soup, and little by little Jack pulled through. We were going away from home ourselves that summer, to North Italy, but we did not start till we saw Jack well on the road to re-established health, and I always consider he owes his life to Eugenio, in whom many shortcomings are overlooked in consideration of this fact.

It is a curious thing that though Jack greatly prefers his own padrona when in health, sits besides her *on* the dinner-table (though he does not eat his own dinner there, he likes to see what his family has to eat), the moment he feels out of sorts he lies in my arms by preference, and seems to have a kind of confidence that once tucked up in them all will be well. Since he lost his teeth he condescends to several good saucerfuls of milk (after the regulation raw

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liver), and is now in his old age as fat and soncy a cat as one could wish to see, having quite lost a rather peevish expression he had in his youth. He lies all day in sun and shade, moving quietly round so as to secure just the degree of warmth that suits him, and when either of us pass him with a caressing word, he will open his mouth with the polite intention of giving a croon in response, but often no sound comes, and he is too lazy to do more than blink his eyes. As often as not he is sprawling across our shoulders,—“the white man’s burden,” as his mistress tells him,—and really, in winter, after a turn of him, he leaves us quite cold when he descends. A dear friend who was once visiting us said reflectively, after observing Jack’s attitudes, “I can’t think how you can keep any clothes fit to be seen in this house.” “That is just what we don’t do,” briskly rejoined the Junior Partner, who has a sneaking weakness for escaping “functions,” and for tramping the roads in her very oldest garments.

What will become of us when dear Jack is gathered to his forefathers I would rather not sit down to imagine. Meantime, verses are written in his honour, he receives his Christmas cards from many old friends, and admirers contend for the honour of taking his photograph.

We had various large cages of doves, and pigeons flew about the court-yard, but no other creatures till about six years ago, when the gardener, Bacci, came one day to say he thought various treasures we had coveted would be found at a neighbouring villa,

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where, in consequence of the demise of the owner, a Russian duke, everything was being sold off. In the course of the week I called at this place to make enquiries and was told the sale was over. Feeling very cross, I said, "Is *everything* sold?"

"Si, Signora," replied the old cameriere, who had been the attendant of the deceased half crazy and wholly vicious owner, "everything except the parrots; and I shall have to sell them, for now, with all I have to do in looking after all these villas, I have no time to attend to them."

"Parrots!" I exclaimed, "What parrots? Where are they?"

"Come this way, Signora, and I will show them to you."

Now it had always been a dream of mine to have a blue and yellow macaw, a red and green ditto, and a white cockatoo; but somehow I had never seen just the time when this fine fancy could be realized conveniently. In old days we once had a butler,—"Hambidge, spelt with a H-ay," I remember he informed me his name was,—who arrived with a parrot in a large cage, and as he was much more bent on hunting up worms and insects for this bird than on keeping its plate clean, I intimated to him that I had myself never been allowed to keep a parrot, and did not see how his could remain. By which I do not mean to say that if I had ever represented that my soul was sick (as the Botticellians now phrase it) for the verification of this dream, the parrots would not have been awarded,—but one has a conscience about imposing,

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especially when your Skye is tucked up every night with his blanket forming just the right ridge for his head, and a biscuit below the ridge in the unlikely contingency of his feeling faint for want of food before morning. But here in the twilight, in a little out-house, swinging on their brass perches, were my blue and yellow macaw, my red and green ditto, and my small white cockatoo with a yellow crest, and a lovely yellow flush through her white feathers. It seemed quite eerie that the precise combination I had dreamed of all my days should be sitting here before me, and in the market!

Old Gaetano discanted on the merits of the birds who had been left to him, and of his desire to find a “ ‘appy ‘ome” for them,—for a consideration. This was one way of putting the matter; but being well aware that a Tuscan would sell his grandmother’s bones if he could thereby turn an honest penny, I did not believe much in the good home part of the sentiment, though I availed myself of its having been introduced to point out that as my house was within a short walk it would be easy for him to come and visit his pets.

I made a rapid calculation of what I could afford for this unexpected temptation, and named a sum at which his face rather fell, and he referred to the original cost of the birds, to say nothing of their expensive brass perches. But I remained firm, and, after he had enquired with engaging candour, “ You are quite sure you could not give more, Signora? ” he said he would bring the birds to my house next day. I walked home feeling rather guilty and wondering what would

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be said when I announced this addition to the family circle. I was well aware that had any right-minded British male been in command, he would have upbraided me for the unsuitable time I had selected to make this purchase, which of itself he would probably have stigmatized as an extremely foolish one, for we were going to England that summer, and would certainly be absent for six months. I walked into my own room, and said to my nice young Scotch maid, "C., I have done a dreadful thing." The girl's eyes beamed : "Ma'am, *you've bought a parrot.*" Now I am certain I never had told that girl that I adored parrots. "Not," I said "*a parrot,* I've bought two macaws and a cockatoo, and they're coming home to-morrow." The girl fairly shrieked with amusement, "Oh, ma'am, you never have ! what *will* Miss say ?" What indeed ? That was the question.

I broke it gently after dinner. I think the reproaches were mild ; but next day, when my birds arrived, there was no further thought of what was or was not expedient. They were simply adored by the whole house, and for five years were the joy of my life and the pride of my heart. The poor Persian indeed was dreadfully scared, and retired below his mistress's bed when he first heard their voices. For many weeks he would hurry past them in the courtyard, with his tail trailing very low indeed. But the day came when Jack would sit on the chair to the back of which Mrs. Blue's chain was fastened, and if she plunged her beak in an affectionate way through his fur, he would lift one large paw and give her bill a good tap.

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That was the summer the Absentee came to take charge, and he used to write me accounts of how he and Blue would partake together of tomato omelet, and how she would wipe her beak on his dinner napkin. There was also a hospital nurse in the house, to whom I had offered summer hospitality after a bad illness, and she and Blue were bosom friends. Holding up a spotted print dress to the light one day, she was puzzled on finding it riddled with holes throughout, till she recollects Blue's love for removing any unequal surfaces, and found that Blue's beak had been diligently applied to the white spots on the blue ground.

Blue had a busy brain and inexhaustible energy, but, unfortunately, every enterprise to which it was applied resulted in direst mischief. If you were sitting on a garden chair, quietly reading your book, with Blue perched behind, and if, suddenly struck by the idea that she was very quiet, you looked round, you would find that she had carefully removed all the brass nails in the back of the chair ; she would then give her cheerful "croak, croak," as much as to say "What a clever bird I am!" I came in one day to find her seated on what was then the only rhododendron bush we possessed, gaily breaking off the young flowering shoots, and throwing them down with joy. All she asked was to live with her family, and she would sit for hours on the edge of the Junior Partner's writing-board, clasping the Junior Partner's free left hand, while the right one guided the pen over the writing-paper, on which sooner or later an assault would be made. Blue was the most absolutely human

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bird I have ever known, so delightfully naughty, and so pleased with herself when she had achieved some extra mischief.

Alfredo, the red bird, was a much more sedate and self-contained person: he rarely came down from his perch, except when the fancy struck him to walk upstairs. Both birds were very fond of the ironing-room, probably because of its warmth. Alfredo talked a good deal, but was most given to utterance when left alone, when I could hear his foolish babble all over the place. He liked being with the gardener of an afternoon, and, for hours together, would climb up and down the garden ladder quite happily. Unlike Blue, he never did any mischief, so we always left his chain unfastened.

Rosina, the little white cockatoo, had a great deal of character, and a perfect fury of a temper. She was a tiny creature, especially in comparison with the macaws, who measured just one metre from beak to tail tip. I have never seen, either at the Zoo or elsewhere, such magnificent birds as these macaws.

In summer they were out all day, and were put into the stanzone at night, and I used, from my bed, to watch the gardener lifting them out into the court-yard of a morning; they looked like two great tropical flowers, and uttered such joyful cries at getting into the sun. In winter they went out when the day was fine and the sun well up, but Blue in particular was a chilly creature, and always had the warmest place in the dining-room, where they lived in winter. Blue was fearfully greedy, and would point, with her head well jerked back, to the sideboard, and indicate with an "Ah" to

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the Junior Partner, that she knew the sugar and biscuits lived there. Whatever in the way of cake or biscuits was given her, she immediately sopped in her water before eating it. Alfredo's great delicacy was a grape, and being of a thrifty turn of mind, he would tilt his head back, so as not to lose a drop of the juice. None of these delicacies tempted Rosina, whose only weakness was *butter*. She was a thorough-going flirt, hated women, and would nestle up to a man, and make the greatest fuss over him. We had to shorten her chain in the dining-room, as she made sudden dives and darts at the poor *cameriera*, whenever the latter came within her reach, and a bite from Rosina was no joke. She never really tamed till after her sad accident.

The servants, one and all, would have run day or night for those birds, and I would see figures slipping about the garden of a morning, with drops of coffee and milk, and bits of biscuit for these spoilt children. If it were a wet day, and Blue could not get out, it was no joke for the *cameriera*, after having swept the heavy Wilton carpet in the dining-room, to have Blue descend into the tray of her stand, and, with her tail, whisk all the sawdust in it over the carpet. After a repetition of this, Blue would be banished to the servants' quarters in disgrace,—“You bad girl, go away,”—and would get more than ever petted and spoiled there. Alfredo was very fond of my Scotch maid, the one who had been trained to be a good manager. She was a tall and very pretty woman, and when we had friends with us he sat on her shoulder as she poured out tea, and the pair made a beautiful picture. One day,

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soon after coming to us, Blue began uttering frightful groans ; I was greatly alarmed, and sent over to her former caretaker, who explained that she was going to lay an egg, and told the gardener what to do for her.

In the early spring of 1899, a frightful tragedy occurred among these birds who had lived together for years before I had them, and in the same room, by day and by night. One Sunday afternoon, friends, who had succeeded to the villa of the former owner, came to see me. I took them into the dining-room, to see the parrots, who were all on their respective perches, Blue and Alfredo at one end of the room and Rosina by herself near the door. Half an hour after my friends had left, I was reading quietly in the drawing-room when I suddenly heard a shriek, and, rushing to where the sound came from, I found the *cameriera*, who was about to prepare the dinner table, standing in the doorway of the dining-room. The room was so full of little white feathers and down that you could hardly see. Alfredo had descended from his perch, and had nearly murdered Rosina. He must have broken her chain, for she, too, was on the floor, and in trying to escape his murderous beak, had just reached the inside of the fire-place, and in another five minutes would have been burned to death ; indeed I was not sure if she was alive. One wing was smashed, and the huge beak of the macaw had gone right through her poor little head. It was a sorry little remnant of a cockatoo that the Junior Partner picked up out of the fire-place.

I knew I should find the gardener at supper at the

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village, and I flew down the avenue, out on the road, and to the Trattoria where he was, and gasped out, "Eugenio, Alfredo has murdered Rosina." The boy never waited to speak, nor did his feet seem to touch the ground, but he literally flew up to the house; when I arrived I found Rosina with the whole household gathered round her. We did what we could, put her in Jackie's discarded basket in my kind maid's room, and next day I took her down to our doctor, himself a great lover of birds. Eugenio carried her tenderly, and she was put under chloroform, and a bit snipped off here, and tacked up there, and in about an hour the doctor said he had done all that was possible, but he doubted her ever coming round. We got her home, and my maid tended her like a sick child and had her at night on her own pillow.

Unluckily a visitor came just then who had an "influenza throat," and, as she had no maid of her own with her, she had to be nursed, and my maid, who was a perfect trap for influenza, took it from her. Some one entering her room with a jug of hot milk startled Rosina, who fell from the pillow to the ground. Next morning she could not walk, and dragged her poor little feet in a curious way. Again I had recourse to the doctor, but when he saw the bird he shook his head; the fall had injured her spine, and he did not think we should get her home alive. While I was waiting in his consulting room, a young woman asked me if I was very fond of the bird, and informed me that in my place she would think it her duty to have it destroyed. Of course, if the bird had

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been in pain I would have done so, but the doctor had assured me Rosina was not suffering; and I could only wonder at the kind of *coraggio* that could lead a girl, a total stranger to me, to thrust her advice, unasked, on a person old enough to be her grandmother!

By dint of careful nursing, Rosina recovered so far as to enjoy life to a very considerable extent, but owing to the loss of her wing, she never again could balance herself on her perch without fear of falling. We put her in a large cage, the door of which was left open so that she could clamber in and out and grasp the fine wires of it with her tiny claws. Of course we never again left her at night with the macaws, and in the day-time we kept her always within sight of the house and of the gardener.

What had induced this murderous attack we shall never know; the Junior Partner took Alfredo's part, and said Rosina must have cheeked him in some way. Macaws are very whimsey and uncertain in their tempers, but that this should occur after at least nine years of peace and amity was certainly very strange.

And now I have to tell the sad ending of all my birds. After the first summer we had them, *Missy Blue* never had any difficulty in laying her eggs; once we allowed her to sit on them for some weeks in the stan-zone, and a pattern mother she was, trotting off to the hole in the ground she had scooped out, and sitting there the livelong day, *furious* if any one came near her. But I never again allowed this, as she got thin and pulled down. The summer of 1899, she laid her egg at the usual time, and an English friend, who hap-

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pened to call that day, begged to have it, as he said he never had had the chance to eat a parrot's egg, and wanted to see what it was like.

We left for England in the end of June. I had let my house to a young couple who wanted to summer in Tuscany, and very wisely preferred the comfort of a private house to a noisy mountain hotel or pension. I left the birds without anxiety, as both my servants and Eugenio simply idolized them. We did not return till the very end of February in the following year, and then I got back alone, having to leave the dear Junior Partner on the Riviera, to recruit after influenza. I arrived about two in the morning, and of course went straight to see my birds, who were in the servants' dining-room. They were overjoyed at seeing me; Rosina in particular could not express all her little feelings; she scolded, she screamed, she chattered and put herself into the wildest state of excitement. The servants told me that she and my late tenant had been inseparable, and that she lived mostly sitting on his shoulder, like the little flirt she was. I was very glad to get to bed after my long journey, as I had myself been ill. Next morning Eugenio came to my room to tell me that Rosina was very ill, and was all huddled up in a heap in her cage. We knew that her spine was fatally injured, and I suppose her excitement on seeing me must have brought on paralysis; she never rallied, and died the next night, forty-eight hours after my return. It was such a sad home-coming.

Of course it was a miracle she had lived so long: nothing but the care and kindness so abundantly lav-

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ished on her had kept her alive. We buried her at the end of the grass walk ; Eugenio cut off from her pretty yellow crest some feathers which I sent to my dear maid, who had had to remain in her native air, as repeated attacks of influenza had so impaired her health. Rosina seemed much larger and heavier after her death than she had ever done in life, when she was such a restless, darting-to-and-fro little creature that she seemed all spirit and no body, especially beside the great macaws. I cried bitterly over her loss, but felt we had nothing to blame ourselves with. But much worse was to come. I did not think the macaws were looking well, nor did the Junior Partner when she returned some ten days later. The winter had been a very severe one ; poor old Furbo, who had been very frail for some time, had succumbed to the cold, and though a fire had been kept going all the time for the birds, and I knew they had had every care and kindness, we thought they looked thin and depressed.

In April Miss Blue began her usual manœuvres, preparatory to the egg-laying, but the egg did not come off. We were very, very busy : after so long an absence much had to be done ; workmen were in the house, and as we were expecting a visit from some old friends in May, I had a great deal to think of to get things in order before they arrived ; and I now blame myself for not having been more on the alert about dear Blue. Several days passed, and I then sent Eugenio over with her to old Gaetano to see what he would advise. Eugenio returned immediately, saying that a certain Contessa had been there, and had flown

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to inspect Blue as soon as she saw her, and had told him to take the bird to a Frenchman, son of the former head of Victor Emmanuel's garden of animals, whose *spécialité* parrots were, and that he could be trusted to treat her with skill and intelligence. Eugenio very properly came back to me for instructions, and I sent him off at once with Blue, thankful to have heard of a qualified person.

He returned with her in an hour or two. The egg had been removed, and though a good deal exhausted, she began to pick up. When I came out into the courtyard, about four o'clock, on my way to pay a visit to a neighbour, Blue was sitting on her perch in the sun. She clambered down when she saw me and began to walk about. Eugenio took her up laughing, saying she wanted to be at her usual mischief; I noticed that a little saliva began to run out of her mouth, and he took her away to administer some of the stuff that the Frenchman had given for her. I returned just in time to dress for dinner, and when the *cameriera* opened the gate for me, my first words were, "How is the Signora Blue?" The woman did not answer, and turning round I saw the tears running down her face. "Don't tell me," I cried, "that there is anything wrong with my Blue!" Irma answered through her sobs, "Oh, Signora, la Blue è morta." She had died a quarter of an hour after I had left the house. I cannot describe the shock I got, or the effect the death of this bird had on me.

The Frenchman came up next day to enquire about his patient. He was most sympathetic, and

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told me that the only times of danger for those birds was when moulting and in laying their eggs, and that it was always safer to squash these before they came to maturity. I felt bitterly that with a little more knowledge on my part I would not have lost my Mrs. Blue ; if I had even known of this man's existence sooner, she might have been saved. We sent her to the Natural History Museum to be stuffed, and the professor there explained that the poor bird's egg had, this time, from some unexplained reason, stuck to her skin, so that she never could have laid it, and that in consequence mortification had set in.

Ours was a very sad house. A few weeks later, one evening after dinner, Irma, the *cameriera*, rushed into the dining-room in the greatest state of excitement, to say that *Alfredo* had laid an egg ! The bird had always been supposed to be a male, had never before laid an egg, and was now about fifteen years old. I was very uneasy, and though he, or *she*, seemed all right, I sent her down early next morning to the Frenchman. He told Eugenio she was all right, and would probably lay another, which she did, and then I thought all danger was over.

We made much of *Alfredo* in those days, now our only treasure. Our friends had arrived, and were most sympathetic over Blue's loss, though they had never seen her. We were busy with them and their sight-seeing and very tired at night. One evening, when I was resting on the sofa, my own maid came to say she did not think *Alfredo* was at all well,— would I come and see her ? I sprang up, for I felt the bird was doomed.

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I found her in a high fever and gasping for breath. I was frantic. It was past ten o'clock. I had not the private address of the Frenchman, who would have left his place of business hours before. Eugenio wrapped Alfredo up and carried her over to his former home: the wretched old *cameriere* was in bed and declined to get up to come down to look at the bird. I hope I may never see him again. I gave her aconite and fresh lemonade; but though she swallowed liquids greedily, the fever did not lessen and she died about midnight. When we sent her to the same professor who had stuffed Blue, he found that a *double* egg had formed in her inside and she could not pass it.

Few people can understand my grief at the loss of these birds, they had been our pets and companions for five years, and never had had an ache nor a pain. If Jackie, dear soul, were to die, we should know he had reached the threescore-and-ten of catdom, and had been a happy little beast all his days; Rosina had been kept alive only by the greatest care; but Mrs. Blue and Alfredo were in the prime of life, and might easily have lived for twenty years to come. To see these magnificent creatures struck down, and to be powerless to help, and to lose them both, was grief unutterable. I had been ill more or less all the winter and had had great fatigue as well as anxiety about the dear Junior Partner, a fragile little creature at the best of times.

The visit of my friends was quite spoilt to me, and, I am afraid, to them also. For months I hated to go into the garden. I would have given the whole of it

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to have my birds back again. No more joyful cries of a morning, no more mischief from Mrs. Blue, only two silent parrots sitting in their beautiful plumage, but dead, dead, in my little sitting-room.

People were very kind, and did not speak to me about the birds, but hardly any one understood what their loss meant to us. In the long, hot afternoons of summer, we used to take them over to the big park, where Blue was quite happy, tearing up the grass with her beak and running about; and Alfredo would find a tree-trunk to gnaw, or a pine cone to pull to pieces; and in wet or cold weather, in winter, when I seldom get out, I never was dull when the birds were there to keep me company. I always enjoy the rare visits I pay to England, but all the eight months we had been away I had been looking forward to seeing my birds and Jackie again, and thought what a pleasant time we should have this summer, when, as my Absentee wrote, " You may be thankful to be in your own house, and not in a Swiss hotel, reading the papers, — when you can get hold of any, — under an electric light." I thoroughly subscribe to that sentiment, but your own home *with* your pets, and without them, are two very different things. As the Junior Partner said mournfully, " We might get fifty parrots, and never again see two like these."

When the Absentee heard of Rosina's death, he said that her proper epitaph was the Persian one, " May God forgive her," and that if I would offer Mrs. Blue and Alfredo to the Shah, who was just then supposed to be coming to Italy on his foreign tour,

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there was probably no post in the kingdom of Persia to which he might not aspire ; the Shah having a passion for macaws. I replied that not even for his advancement could I think of parting with my birds, little thinking how soon they were to be taken out of our loving care. And it was more than their loss and death, it was the end of a long-cherished dream, and the closing of a chapter in life.

## *Chapter VI*

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### *The Genus, British Tourist in Italy*

#### *Our Own Summer Tours*

“ Honour the tourist, he walks in a halo of romance.”

*Vernon Lee*

“ Ah would some power the giftie gie us.”

*Burns*

“ It takes all sorts of folk to make the world, and I am glad I am not one of them.”

*American Proverb*

I WOULD that I might meet the halo-of-romance walking tourist. To him I would joyfully devote my best energies, but I fear that species is extinct. His modern counterpart too often appears to be clad in the breastplate and armour of conceit and self-sufficiency, and if, in those with whom you have to do, ill-breeding is not added, you are fortunate.

Having a large background of friends in England, not to mention having ourselves wandered about the world a good deal, we naturally see a great many stray people in the course of the year. Acquaintances are apt to multiply in snowball fashion, and during the early spring months Tuscany is flooded with tourists of every sort and kind.

The defect of British energy is that it is apt to run rather wild in whatever special line it takes up, and, so far as I have had occasion to observe my country people in recent years, there are two main lines, in one or other of which are to be found the most ardent spirits of their time: the cult of garden-

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ing, and the cult of the æsthetic or Botticellian type. I notice further that these are parallel lines, the dwellers on which may meet, but never mingle; and it is only natural that living here, in the Mecca, so to speak, of the latter, we should see more of them than of the former. Indeed, considering all that one reads and hears of the extraordinary development of a taste for gardening in England within the last twenty years, I am often struck with the total ignorance the younger generation of England displays of anything connected with plants and flowers, or of country life and its pursuits.

I was standing one day in a garden with a young lady, a relation of some neighbours of ours; she was here on a visit, and I remarked to her on the beauty of the acanthus in her brother's garden. She beamed: "*Acanthus, ah, do tell me, which are the acanthus?*" We were just then standing among them! She was a most æsthetic young woman,—St. George's correspondence classes, and all the rest of it; I knew in a moment that my mention of acanthus had touched the chord of Corinthian capitals, Greek architecture, etc., etc., but it *was* odd. This young person embroidered her own dresses in the most approved high art shades, and went about in raiment of a cut and style that was the despair of her Tuscan residential relation, who was a person of very good taste in all his surroundings. But she was not a solitary example of ignorance. I was asked one day if my garden possessed any "*Japanese orchids*." I had never connected orchids with Japan, and don't recall having seen any while there, and I answered in the negative;

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but presently we passed a bed of Spanish irises, and the enquirer, pointing to them, said, "There are the Japanese orchids I was asking for." No doubt he had heard irises called, as they sometimes are, the "poor man's orchids," and muddled it up. I have also been told of hortensias flowering in the open in the month of March, and on going to inspect these remarkable plants, found them to be the large saxifrage megasea. The latest information I have had was that larkspurs were lupins, but I could multiply instances of astounding ignorance in regard to gardening matters of the most ordinary description, among people who have presumably had some opportunities afforded them of knowing better.

British tourists in Tuscany form groups of types as distinct and as varied as those of the Tuscans, whom we have already been considering. First of all there are the people who "want to know" everything in heaven and earth in the way of practical information, and who think your mission in life is to supply them with it,—hotels, pensions, masters, even to the weather, and what kind of temperature will they find when they arrive a month or two months after the date of their letter. I often wonder why they don't buy a Murray or a guide-book of some kind. After you, overworked, and busy, as you probably are, with an inconvenient bump of conscientiousness, have gone the round of hotels, pensions, paying guest-houses, etc., in your anxious desire to discover where the best of possible places will be for the young girl,—"We don't know her personally, but she is a friend of people

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we should like to oblige, therefore, will you be so very kind," etc.,—after, as I say, you have mounted many stairs, and written many letters, the young person has other views and goes elsewhere.

I now keep a written sheet of such hotels and pensions as I happen to know have given satisfaction in previous years, taking care to add that if the proprietor has been changed, the whole conditions may be quite different; that I always recommend people to go to an hotel on arrival, and look about for themselves, *and*, will they kindly return my sheet of names and addresses, as it will do for the next enquirer.

Most of this class of enquirers are singularly wanting in ordinary politeness, and very often do not even take the trouble to call and thank you. Last year, just as we returned home and were *very* busy after our long absence, the Junior Partner got a letter of this kind from a youth, whose parents I had known in the dark ages, intimating his wish to find quarters for himself and a friend at artist's prices, in a central situation in town. A good deal of trouble was taken, and then, to tell the truth, I forgot all about these boys until a friend asked me one day if *I* knew where they were to be found, as they had not been near *her*. I asked the Junior Partner to write and say we would be glad to see them at a certain date, some days ahead. After waiting several days, during which we, of course, could make no other engagements for that particular afternoon, a note came, saying they were very busy with their sight-seeing, sketching, etc., and that the following Sunday would suit them better than the day

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we had named. They were politely informed of our regret that their date would not suit us!

So much for the impolite type ; then there is the section who are both impolite *and* ignorant. The most prominent of these whom I recall is a certain Irishman who had brought an introduction to us, and who sent in his card one morning about eleven o'clock, when, being only just returned home after a spring holiday tour, we were very busy getting the drawing-room into order. Of course this individual should have written from his hotel and asked at what time it would be convenient for him to be received. But he had come a long way, and, for the sake of the head of the family from whom he brought a letter, I desired he might be shown in. In the course of conversation, he enquired if there was not a place near Florence called Tuscany. I don't remember what I replied to this very remarkable geographical enquiry, but I know I avoided the eye of the Junior Partner for fear I might stumble. I have never been in Ireland, but the name and address on his card suggested a person of some social standing, and, presumably, of some education.

The Toynbee Hall people are among the greatest offenders in this kind of way ; they know much more about the galleries, in their own estimation, than the people who kindly offer to show them the way about, and I have known them to accept an invitation to a hospitable villa, and then, when all due preparations had been made for their comfort, write at the last moment to say that they were too fatigued to keep their engagement.

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Then there is the great Botticelli group, young men and maidens, and æsthetic enthusiasts generally. Ah, what a weariness to the spirit their raptures are. I am very fond of Botticelli's pictures myself, "in spite," as an artist said lately, "of the copies." But there is reason in everything, and the provoking part of these raptures is that you feel the note of admiration is, as often as not, forced and artificial, and the outcome of "Culture," with a very large C.

The mania for Botticelli is of very recent date. About thirty-five years ago a well-known devotee of the "quattrocento" told the head of the Uffizi Gallery that she thought of essaying the large Botticelli *tondo* in the Tuscan room, and his reply was "Ah, dear Signora, why choose that *brutto BRUTTO* (hideous) picture, when there are so many beautiful ones in our Gallery?" Think of this heresy!

I am the fortunate possessor of one of this lady's copies of the said picture, and of some other work of hers from the lower Church at Assisi; of the latter work, the present P. R. A. once said to me, that although one could see it was that of an amateur, he had never seen any copies so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the Quattrocentists. There are still some people in Italy, besides the old sacristans of churches, who will remember the sisters "Christina and Georgina," with the Scotch bishop, who often accompanied them on painting pilgrimages, the ecclesiastic gloved in episcopal purple, and carrying a scarlet umbrella. I don't know the special signification of a scarlet umbrella, but I remember once being desired

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by a *canonico* in Seville Cathedral to put mine out of sight, and I was mortally afraid he was going to turn me out of the building. Among this lot there are even mothers of families, who find it necessary, in order to lead the inner life, to turn their backs every spring on husband and children and make a pilgrimage to the South. I know one such instance, where young girls just entering society were left to their own devices, while their mother solaced her soul in Florentine galleries, Venetian lagoons, and Browning-haunted heights of Asolo, accompanied by a kindred spirit, and escorted by a Roman convert priest. It is all very odd to people with old-fashioned ideas.

And certainly not less so are the present-day fathers and mothers in England, who send out their girls alone to unknown pensions, chaperoneless. This is a quite new development, and in one case of the kind that came under my own observation, a singularly unsuitable choice of residence had been made, no doubt from pure ignorance; a serious illness ensued, and friends came to the rescue. These young ladies (one of them was not even "out") belonged to a good English family, and I was electrified one day when they casually dropped the information, that they had attended the Borghese Club ball, chaperoned by their *Italian parlatrice*, and had danced till four o'clock in the morning. Anything quite so outrageous, in the proceedings of the British "Miss," has never before come my way. When Italian fathers of families take their womenkind to this ball, the party retires before twelve o'clock.

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But, indeed, it is not only in the case of English girls, coming abroad for health or education, that some sort of supervision or companionship is desirable; in the case of delicate or invalid boys care is quite as essential; and English people sitting at home in comfort and decency have very little idea to what evils their sons may be exposed when sent off alone to buy their experience of life. A friend of mine once told me of an experience she had in Tuscany, when she was travelling with her invalid son, a youth of about eighteen years of age; they were on their way to the Pistoiese mountains, where they intended passing the hot months, and stopped in Florence for a couple of nights for the purpose of replenishing their stores of medicines, tea, biscuits, and all the hundred and one little things necessary when going to these out of the way of shops regions.

The night of their arrival her son was seized with a recurrence of malarial fever, which he had contracted some time before in the winter station to which he had been sent on account of lung delicacy. It was the month of August, and not only all the English doctors had left, but also the leading Italian medical men, many of whom have a summer practice at bathing and mountain resorts. The young man had always been under homœopathic treatment, and hearing from her landlord that there was a homœopathic doctor in the town, my friend sent for him. After a few visits, this man suggested to the mother that her son should enter upon a course of life,—I will not sully my pages with the precise terms he employed, but will

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only say that, had his suggestion been adopted, that young man would probably have been ruined for life, in body and soul. My friend, having lived all her days among people who were only occupied with things "lovely and of good report," had the greatest difficulty in understanding the meaning of the words this medical man addressed to her, and she told me that when she did grasp their import, she had to put the greatest constraint upon herself to refrain from her natural impulse to ring the bell, and ask the landlord to kick him down stairs; but in the middle of an illness of three weeks' duration she did not dare to dismiss him. What she did was this: although she was sitting up the best part of the night in the sick room, no matter how early the doctor called, he always found her fully dressed for the day; and she invariably received him with great ceremony and accompanied him to the bedside of his patient, who was never left five minutes alone with him.

Now there was no natural inclination to vice in this particular youth, but just let any British father or mother imagine what the consequences might have been, of a youth falling into the hands of a medical practitioner of that stamp of morality. I personally have known of only one other similar case. It was that of a young Russian nobleman travelling with his tutor; in that case similar advice was given and *taken*.

No one knows better than I do how difficult it generally is to decide whether the mother is most required at home, or by the absent invalid son or daughter ordered abroad for the winter; but in cases

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where it is absolutely impossible for her to go herself, a thoroughly trustworthy substitute should be provided.

Of all tourist bores, the "local self-government," "Board School," "County Council" type, who has a thirst for statistical information, is the greatest. When people come out to Italy they ought to leave statistics behind them. If I am too hardly pressed in this direction, I fear I yield to the temptation of a little embroidery, to conceal the depths of my ignorance.

Of course I do not mean to say that all tourists are like those I have been describing. There are many to whom it is a pleasure to render any little help, so grateful and appreciative are they of whatever you may be able to do for them. I have unbounded sympathy for those who realize the greatness of their opportunities, and who want to turn every hour to account. The Junior Partner is unkind enough to say that when these last have come to me to know what they ought to see, they go to her to know what they may leave out! I myself so hate that "leaving out"! and when one misses seeing a place, it is very rarely that the chance comes again. Forty-five years ago we were driving over the Carpathians, the Söemering railroad was only half finished in those days, and we passed the grotto of Adelsberg without seeing it; it was a case of our being in time to catch a particular steamer at Trieste. I have never had another chance to see Adelsberg, and so have laid the lesson to heart.

Sometimes, indeed, people turn up so well pre-

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pared by previous study for what they are going to see, that they know just where to find everything, and I remember one very happy time we had with two friends (*mirabile dictu*, they were also relations) in this way. But that was, in more senses than one, a "Golden Age" visit, and such red-letter times do not come every day.

Lovers of gardens do occasionally cross my path, and then the joy of comparing notes is very great. I always think everything here, in the gardening line, must appear very inferior after the lovely, well-ordered gardens at home; but they seem to find a charm in the wild abundance here, and what a modern writer has well termed the "wonderful efflorescence of the Italian spring."

I have an infallible test by which I always know if English people will or will not *see* Italy. It is the way in which they speak of the olive trees. I never make any remark on the subject, but I listen, and if they bewail the want of "our beautiful English trees," or if they allude to the olives as those "colourless grey trees," I know then that it is no use; these people may travel, they may have the best of couriers, and the newest of guide-books, but *Italy* they will never see with appreciative eye or understanding brain. And there is something almost more beautiful than the olives, but tourists have no chance to see that, because it does not appear before they have all fled; I mean the fresh young growth of the ilex trees, recalling the "grey green" of the Thames scenery, only more silvery. For hours of a July evening, I

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have watched the tops of the old ilex trees that skirt the east side of the big park, tossing to and fro in the light summer breeze, and an effect more beautiful and poetic it would be hard to find.

Some years ago, a gentleman much interested in the work of art guilds asked me if I could give some practical advice and help to a young friend of his, who had just completed a very scholarly piece of work that had involved great labour, literary and artistic. Independently of being myself under some obligations to him, I was glad to be able to be of service to the young lady in question, whom I had never seen, but whose work was thorough and satisfactory. Some correspondence between us ensued, and one spring, finding herself in Florence, she came out to call on us, as she said, to thank me. This kind of courtesy so rarely comes my way, that I was quite touched by her remembrance of a matter so small that it had entirely passed from my own memory. On enquiring into her plans, it appeared that she and her spinster companions were contemplating a tour to Arezzo, Gubbio, Urbino and the Adriatic coast, all to be compressed into an incredibly short time. I had done this tour myself, and ventured to ask her if there was any pressing necessity for their being back in England, as she had said they must be, by Easter, which was already very close at hand. She giggled slightly.

Well, yes, she *had* a rather important engagement; — the fact was, she was going to be MARRIED at Easter.

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"Going to be married!" I exclaimed, "that is indeed an important engagement, but why in the world did you not wait to make your trip out here as your honeymoon?"

"No," she explained, "that would not have suited;" and the honeymoon trip was to be—a fortnight up the Thames!

I felt, like Elizabeth's gardener, that this division of things was an arrangement that might indeed be termed "sehr modern."

But when I came to look at it, I saw how sensible the plan was. The British male would probably have been bored to death at Gubbio and Urbino, and unless the culinary resources of these towns have developed largely since I visited them, there might have been trials of temper unsuited to so blissful a period. Whereas, here were these three girls, all of the Botticelli cult, and one of them, at least, come to take a kind of farewell of the poetical epoch of her youth before beginning the serious business of her life. I think I heard once after that from her: it was something about her having been offered a shanty at Rimini for the bathing season; her soul was Italy-sick! and did I think, etc. I have only mentioned this little episode, because out of it grew the very oddest of all the many odd letters I have received from total strangers during our residence in Tuscany.

One morning when I was pelting on with some business letters that were due for that day's post, the mail was brought to me. I just glanced at the incoming letters and saw that among them, in a strange hand, was

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one that seemed distinctly curious, and that certainly could wait a leisure moment.

When I joined my family at breakfast I took this composition with me, and when the meal was over I proceeded to read it aloud. It was so original that I make no apology for giving it entire. It began :—

“ *Dear Madam* : My dear college friend Mrs. — gave me some weeks ago, encouragement to write to you about a bust, polychrome, in the Bargello, by Donatello. The head turns to the left, the expression is very striking, the lump in the throat is very much developed. It is said to be a portrait of Niccolo da Uzzano, a humanist of the Poggio group, who took an active part in the politics of the Republic, at the time of the exile of Cosimo di Medici. But some say it is Cassni, in whose house Niccolo da Uzzano was staying.

“ Now I have been studying modelling in —, for several months, and came across a plaster cast of this bust. It struck me very much by its expression ; such tranquility, firmness, self-command, sadness, and withal a certain naïveté. I was reading, at the time, Prescott’s Ferdinand and Isabella, and the impression left on my mind of the personality of Don Carlos, Prince of Viana, half brother to Ferdinand, was identical with the moral expression of the bust. A Spanish student, from the town of the Prince of Viana, Barcelona, happened to be introduced to me. He *recognized* the bust as that of the prince. He even got me a photograph, that of a picture which had a prize in Rome in 1881, on the subject of the Prince

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of Viana. He is seen young, meditating in his library, his eyes and head looking down, and his face a good deal covered with his hair *aux enfants d'Edouard*. Yet the leading traits are extremely like Donatello's bust, when we place the bust in the same position. Monsieur P. M. got the name ascribed to the bust for me; through a friend of mine I obtained his kind investigation.

"But I am not content so. Perhaps you could look further into the matter, in which case I should be most obliged and delighted.

"The first point is to prove that the prince was in the courts of Italy during Donatello's life. Prescott (1650) affirms it. The prince left Italy in 1452, after Alphonso's death (1451). Donatello was in Florence before his departure for Siena on October 19, 1457. ("The Great Artists, Ghiberti, Donatello," *Leader Scott* p. 84.) The last year of his life was spent in Florence, when he worked much for Catherine di Medici.

"Three books have been recommended to me; 'Donatello,' par A Müntz, Paris, Rouam, 1885: 'Donatello,' par Schmarzoon, Leipzig, 1886: but the one which would be the most accessible for me, through your kindness, would be I think the third, 'Catalogo delle Opere di Donatello, per Milanesi Florence, 1887.'

"If the catalogue be really complete, and the bust of Carlos Prince of Viana be in it, I shall consider my point to be proven; although even then it will not be evident to others. It would be interesting to possess

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at Florence the features of so interesting and unfortunate a prince, one forward in the comprehension of his times, versed in philosophy, and a decided partisan of a regional government. It would also be interesting to me as physiognomist and modeller to know I had read those features rightly. Hoping, dear madam, that you will be able to help me without fatigue to yourself,

Believe me, yours sincerely," ——

When I had finished reading this amazing composition, and we had composed our features into their usual gravity, I put it to the family, what was to be my reply to this most original letter; the Absentee was then with us. "Write," he said reflectively, "and say that, if she'll go down to Modane, and pass that box of tuberoses you are fuming about, you'll hunt up all the Viana business."

I was just then engaged in a desperate effort to rescue a parcel of tuberose bulbs which the officials at Modane declared had already begun to sprout, and could therefore on no account be allowed to pass the frontier. The plain English of this was that they intended to sell them and keep the proceeds. But I felt that the writer of that letter was not in the least likely to see the point of the joke, nor for the matter of that, of any other. I really felt for her: to find herself disappointed in the discovery of a kindred spirit and a sister-crank must have been a cruel blow. I believe I wrote a polite note, regretting that neither my physical strength nor my time allowed of my undertaking the very interesting work she was

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good enough to propose to me ; and that, on every account, I would advise her coming to make her own investigations and researches in person, in which case I would be happy to be of any assistance that I could in the way of recommending quarters to her. But can any one imagine the frame of mind, out of Bedlam, that could indite such an epistle to a total stranger? Oddly enough this hideous bust has in recent times been extensively copied, and is now to be found gracing all the shops of the lowest class of antiquarians ; as often as not the shopman uses it as a handy peg on which to hang his straw hat, and idle boys stick a pipe in its mouth,—so I have plenty of opportunities of recalling this too distinctly “precious” document regarding Carlo di Viana.

Far and away the most important tourist who ever came up to see what we often, in joke, call “our grounds,”—*ours* they are, in the sense that we take a great deal more pleasure out of them than their owner does,—was Her Majesty Queen Victoria, in the spring of 1893, when she was for the second time occupying the Villa Palmieri. We knew that our landlord had been bidden there one Friday evening, and when next morning we had occasion to go into town, and met his gardeners and servants flying in every direction, I said to the Junior Partner that I thought the Queen must be coming up.

My prophetic soul was right, for at lunch the secretary sent down a courteous message, to say he knew I often had friends with me of a Saturday afternoon, and would I on that day kindly refrain from taking

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them across to the park, as they were expecting the English queen to tea! Just then our landlord had a large family party in the house, and as very short notice of the royal visit had been given, all the servants were beside themselves. I sent our gardener out to sweep and tidy up the avenue, and then we ran up our flag, and, just below the creeper-clad *berceau*, hung out some fine old brocades on the fragment of wall overlooking the avenue and were all very smart indeed when Her Majesty and suite drove by.

At the conclusion of her visit, we, a little party of English, were standing within this *berceau* as the carriage drove slowly down, a stalwart Highland gillie behind, to the great joy and admiration of my Drumnadrochit maid. "Our gracious grandmother," as poor Prince Eddy used to say, did not that day appear to be in a gracious mood, for she *dumped* down her parasol on the top of her bonnet; Princess Henry looked at the old stuffs so liberally displayed, curiously and with the air of a person who wondered what possible connection they could have with people who lived in that farm-house. Our landlord's "collections," of which the library is the leading feature, are famous, and she may not unreasonably have supposed we were an offshoot of the big villa, in the shape of poor relations.

The young Grand Duchess, Alice of Hesse, sat opposite her august grandmother, and laughed and nodded up to us in most friendly fashion. We had seen her a few days before making her purchases at Sig. Cantagalli's, and wondered who the pretty girl

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was, so full of life and fun. Sig. Cantagalli's showrooms of artistic pottery is *the place* to see all the travelling celebrities of every nation, and it was that spring that I saw there for the first time the eldest daughter of the Empress Frederick, a singularly striking and handsome woman, with Titian red hair, and a certain dramatic air about her that would prepare you to hear her at any moment burst into song or recitation. I do not know if she has reverted to a former type : her father's grandmother was the beautiful Queen Louise, and certainly there is not a trace about her of the German *Hausfrau* look that is so conspicuous in all her English aunts and cousins.

Out of this visit of Queen Victoria grew three urgent requests from her that our landlord would let his villa for her occupation the following spring. But to our great joy, he was not to be persuaded so to do ; had he wished to have done so, we would have had to give up our house for the suite, and I never could have fancied it again.

Among the British colony this refusal of Monsieur de —— was considered churlish, but I could not see it in this light. He is an old man and an Austrian subject, and may with great reason have felt that, if the Queen of England, coming so often to Italy as she did, wished to have a *pied-à-terre* there, she could easily purchase one, or avail herself of that offered by her "good friend and brother," King Umberto.

The spring months in Tuscany are the "pick of the year," just as the grouse-shooting time is in Scotland, and I think if the Emperor Francis Joseph of

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Austria were to intimate to any Scotch proprietors that he had a fancy to occupy their moors for the months of August and September, the latter would be very much astonished.

The sentiment of royalty conferring honour on a residence by occupying it does not prevail abroad to the extent it does in England, and I know the remark was made here that, had the Commendatore allowed himself to be persuaded to turn out, Her Majesty would have had what was termed the *coraggio* to present him with her photograph by way of recompense. The Italian royalties give out of all proportion to their income, more so, I believe, than any other European royalty, and are generous and open-handed to a fault; therefore German thrift is neither understood nor appreciated in this country, and various instances of it were quoted during the Queen's visits to Florence, and commented upon in a way that was very unpleasant for her subjects to hear. Nothing has ever convinced the Italians that the Battenberg alliance was purely one of affection, and that it did not veil some dark design of British diplomacy.

One undoubted advantage of living in Central Europe is that you are near so many places of interest, and have therefore a wide field of choice for your own *villeggiatura*. Summer, when tourists have all departed, is the real time to enjoy Italy, and I used to feel it much pleasanter to spend the summer at home, or at least not to go out of Tuscany, but go farther south during the cruel cold of winter.

I have spent many happy summers pottering about

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in holes and corners, chiefly in company with the Absentee, on occasions when the Junior Partner was on a tour of English visits, in the bosom of respectability, if not in what Mr. Hare's critics term "the best houses." But alas! youth does not last forever, and digestion is a worm that is apt to turn, after a too prolonged practice of the old diarist's advice "to diet with the natives." Good wine, bread, eggs, and fruit are generally to be obtained, and during the hot weather one can do very well on these. But it is all very rough, and as we never enter a railway carriage so long as a small trap is at all practicable, it is very tiresome to find in the morning that your old bones ache so from the shaking of the previous day that a rest is necessary.

There are all sorts of delightful mountain places in Tuscany, but few of them have any kind of decent hotel accommodation, and such as possess this are crowded with Italians, whose one idea of enjoyment lies in making a noise, and who thereby ruin every place they frequent. Fifteen years ago there was no more delightful retreat than Vallombrosa, but since a funicular railroad has been made to it, and a number of hotels, cafés, and restaurants started, the whole charm of it to English repose-loving people is gone.

The only way to be really comfortable in out-of-the-way mountain places, is to engage a shanty, and cart up to it your own servants and such necessaries of life as are indispensable. But this plan is open to many objections; your servants are probably too demoralized by the kind of freedom that makeshifts en-

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tail, to be of any use when you return home. The place may not suit you, in which case you must either sacrifice the rent you have paid for it, or remain disliking it, and in the latter case the change does you more harm than good, and, at best, such a continuance of the home-groove affords no change of thought, and no rest for the housekeeper who has to plod on in the ruts of daily home life, probably with the added difficulty of securing supplies. When a large family is in question, this way of spending the summer may have its advantages; but we, being so small a party, prefer, when we leave home, to be as free as air, sending directions for letters and papers to be forwarded every few days, according to our next move. I have had to come mournfully to admit that a succession of home-keeping Tuscan summers, however delightful at the time, have a certain enervating effect, not only on your physique, but even on your British morale!

Switzerland I hold in the same estimation as Pauline de la Ferronays (Mrs. Augustus Craven) in the beloved "Récit" did, and particularly dislike going there, not only abhorring the grasping natives, but being out of tune with everything,—air, scenery, *ways*, and the hordes of British tourists (including the British chaplain), from whom there is no escape.

It is one thing to go to Switzerland from England, but going from Italy, all the colour looks so poor and faint after the deeper tints of the southern land. And to sit on a mountain top with a possibility of rain and snow overtaking you, when probably half

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your warm clothing has been left at the bottom of the hill, and *all* the books you want, is not my idea of enjoying a summer.

The ideal country in which to travel is France. There means are always so well adapted to the end, and a certain common ground lies between you and the natives; and, as a rule, the people you meet in travelling are both courteous and well-bred. But if one does not wish to go so far, or to cross the frontier, which always involves a certain amount of trouble anent custom houses and a change of money, there is ample choice of delightful places in Italy itself, so long as one is inured to a certain amount of heat. But no one who has not lived in hotels frequented by Italians, even of the upper classes, can imagine what a *soffranza* it is. They are the noisiest people on the face of the earth, and when out for a holiday they set all small decorum at defiance, pelt each other with pellets of bread across the dinner-table, and yell and shout from morning to night.

Since Queen Margherita has taken so much to Gressonay and Courmayeur, that district is largely patronized by Italians. Two years ago, when I was staying for some weeks at Aosta, some friends came down to the hotel where I was; they had found Courmayeur quite impossible, and were unable to endure longer the noise made in the room adjoining their own by a family of children, who were allowed to turn the handle of a barrel-organ till one o'clock in the morning!

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In the summer of 1890 we were moving about continually for three months, and during the whole time we only once met an English-speaking person, and he was an American! Part of that time was spent in the Val Sugana, which we approached from the Bassano side, going as far as Vetricolo, and part in the Veneto. Personally I would ask no better than to spend the greater part of summer in Venice, but that, also, I am obliged to allow, is not a change that makes for building up health. There are any number of mineral waters in Italy, and of bathing places that English doctors have never heard of. I remember that Sir Spencer Wells turned up that summer at Levico, just below Vetricolo, and acknowledged how much he had extended his information about these places. The great *stabilmento* of Roncegno lies just in the middle of the Val Sugana, and there one finds an excellent hotel, with a restaurant where people having rooms in the village can have their meals, which is very convenient for those who are taking baths and waters.

The summer of 1891 we spent in England, but in 1892 we had a most varied and interesting tour, stopping in many of the old towns of Central Italy, on our way to the borderland where Italy and Austria touch. We stayed some time at a charming little place, which I think the late *Times* correspondent in Rome was the first to make known to fame, Gogna by name. The only drawback to Gogna is the extreme hardness of its water; this is a serious matter for people accustomed to use only rain water. Spaniards speak not of a change of air, but of water, as affecting health

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more than anything ; there were splendid roads and delightful fir-woods carpeted with cyclamens. Gogna is, so to say, just at the back of Auronzo, and the drive from there to the Misurina Lake is one of the most beautiful I have ever seen, much finer than that from the Misurina to Cortina, which is the one generally taken by tourists.

It was in July when we were there, and the hedge-rows were full of lovely wild flowers, among which were gorgeous scarlet lilies. Cortina d'Ampezzo I think a much overrated place, it is so very shadeless, and such a glare on the roads, with blinding dust. The post service from there to Toblach is admirably arranged, and the road is lovely. From Toblach we took rail along the valley of the Pusterthal, to Franzensfeste, and down the Brenner to Botzen, from which point we started again for the Western Tyrol, up by the Mendel and so on to Rabbi, where we remained some weeks, as I took the baths and waters there.

I should have liked to have gone on from there to Campiglio, the place the poor Empress of Austria was so devoted to, but the only way of reaching it on that side is by mule-back, and I knew I ought not to undertake so much fatigue. There are excellent carriage roads to Campiglio, and a diligence service both from Trent and from Riva on the Lago di Garda. However, by the time we had got down to the latter place it was rather late in the year to begin another ascent. All the country at the back of Riva, the district where Garibaldi used to harry the Austrians in old days (dropping down on them just as

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they were cooking their meals), is delightful, and we drove through it, stopping a night at Venzone, and coming out at Brescia.

From there we went to Bergamo, one of the most picturesquely situated towns in North Italy, and worth a halt if only to see the Moroni portraits in the Gallery there. From there to Piacenza by railway, and after that driving down the magnificent road that cuts through the Apennines all the way to Genoa. The Absentee had joined us at Bergamo, and we spent a week at Bobbio, which I had wanted to visit ever since reading old Miss Margaret Stokes's account of it, in connection with her researches of the lives of the early Irish saints in Italy. Bobbio is a most interesting place, finely situated, and the hotel people were so kind and hospitable, coming up every evening after dinner to enquire if things had been to our taste, and sitting down to drink wine with us. The Absentee got plenty of sketching, and the Parocco was most friendly in allowing him access to the few remaining treasures of the once famous Abbey.

At Genoa, that year, there was a very interesting exhibition on account of the Christopher Columbus *feste*: beautiful old furniture and Savona ware, which I found embraced much greater variety of majolica than I had been aware of, both in colour and in decoration. We gave ourselves a rest in the delightful old hotel on the beach at Santa Margherita, where I am always made to feel at home and given the run of the garden, both as to fruit and flowers,—“Just take what grapes you want, Signora.”

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That was one of the most varied and delightful summer tours we ever made. The following year the Junior Partner was in England, and I went to the Bagni di Casciana, a little place on the coast, on the Maremma line to Rome. Its waters are precisely the same as those of Aix-les-Bains, and the bathing service is remarkably well arranged. It was the month of August and decidedly hot. Professor Grocco had begged me not to be later than July in going there; but I did not want to be long away from home that year, and if you are only going away for a limited time it is much wiser to take the first part of the hot weather at home, rather than come back too soon and before it is over.

Of course, at that season, there were no English at Casciana. I stayed at a small pension, where I was treated with the greatest kindness and consideration by the padroni, who had property in the neighbourhood, and made all their own wine and oil, and had their own garden supplies. They gave me a sitting-room, and allowed me to have my meals at the hours that suited me, as those of the place would have been very inconvenient to me.

Signor Ancona, fresh from his opera triumphs in London, was in this house, and Madame Costa, wife of the great Roman artist, Giovanni Costa; she had many amusing accounts of her visits to Naworth to give me, as well as most interesting reminiscences of Mason and Leighton in their early days in Rome. There was also a very agreeable Frenchman, from Corsica, spending the summer there. I could not

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understand why Professor Grocco had carefully written on my prescription *one* bath a day. I had never heard of any one taking *more* than one bath a day, and many people find it advisable only to take mineral baths on alternate days. But Italians, who do not love a country place at the best, think Casciana very dull, a hole in fact, and so, to shorten the necessary length of stay, many of them will take two, and even three, baths in one day! Hence the Professor's caution.

When I had finished the course, I determined to take advantage of being so close to Volterra to visit a place I had always been so anxious to see, but which is not very accessible, being at some distance from the railway, both on the Siena and Leghorn lines.

Of all the many subjects of interest in this wonderful old land, none have the same fascination for me as those connected with Etruria, and though I have not been able to visit many of the Etruscan sites,—on account of their extreme unhealthiness in summer, the only possible time for that kind of rough travelling,—I was very familiar with them through the descriptions of Dennis, and was extremely glad of this opportunity of spending some days in one of the most interesting of them all. I suppose no one can ever forget his first sight of the old arch and gateway, as you enter Volterra; but indeed the whole place is full of interest, and I hope to return to it some day. I was not fortunate in the moment of my visit, for the cathedral and some of the churches were under repair and many pictures and other objects of interest were packed away out of sight. But that did not affect the wonderful beauty of

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its situation and the views from its ramparts over the surrounding plains. I left at an early morning hour, to drive across to the house of some old friends who have a property in the neighbourhood of the curious Sanctuary of San Vivaldo, where there are very interesting terra-cotta sculptures by Gambassi, the master of Lucca della Robbia.

All this country is rich in Etruscan remains, and in the large hall of my friend's Fattoria were some beautiful sepulchral urns that had been excavated in the neighbourhood. When my visit was over, they drove me to San Gimignano, *delle belle torre*, that town, unique in Italy and perhaps in the world.

I had not been there for many years, and enjoyed extremely revisiting its many places of interest. There is now a quite passable inn there, much frequented in spring and autumn by artists. Formerly one had to make a day trip of it, either from Florence or from Siena, as there was no place in which one could spend the night. I had engaged charming quarters at Siena; my bedroom opened on to a terrace shaded by creepers, and looking straight across to the Duomo. I spent a delightful week there, and would have gladly remained longer, but I had not too much time for the tour I had mapped out. I left the railroad at a little station on the Siena-Grosseto line, and drove all the way to Montepulciano, stopping a few hours at Pienza to rest and to see the very interesting cathedral.

The drive from it to Montepulciano, through most fertile and richly wooded country, was new ground to me, and I had planned to remain some days at Monte-

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pulciano, making it a centre for several places of interest in the neighbourhood. But, unluckily, a son-in-law of the old landlord of the only hotel had returned home the day before I arrived ; he ruled the whole house, and was a rude, violent man. I had engaged a bedroom on the express condition that no one was to come upon the terrace outside of it, and when I found that this fellow was contemplating using the terrace as a place to sit with his noisy companions, and would drink and smoke there all the afternoon and evening, I told my maid to repack our things, and the day after we arrived we drove across country to Cortona, which I knew of old.

On our previous visit there, the Museum was closed for Easter holidays and the *custode* absent, so that I had never seen the Etruscan lamp which is the great treasure of the place. Now the only other inhabitant of the inn there was the learned cleric who was just then engaged on literary guide-book work for Murray, and who, like myself, was going on to Perugia, which at that non-tourist season is a most delightful desert, and where I wandered about looking up all the old familiar favourites, not forgetting the picture in the Museo with the wonderful columns, at which, as the old *custode* said, "Giovanni e Federigo" (Costa and Leighton) would sit and gaze for hours together. I spent a week at Assisi, one of my best-beloved haunts, and drove from there to Foligno, stopping at Spello to look once more at the lovely Pinturicchios ; I was only going to Foligno for the purpose of visiting Montefalco, never having seen the early Benozzo Gozzolis there.

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Besides these, there was a whole school of Umbrian artists, whose very names were new to me, and whose works, brought in from old churches and *gateways* in the surrounding district, can now be seen collected together in the little local museum. The inn there is, or rather was, of the humblest description; but if one were remaining there for some time the people who keep it would arrange for supplies from Foligno. Some Italians, who came over for the day from the Roman side while I was there, had taken the precaution to bring some provisions with them, and I confess I wished I had been equally wise in my generation. But the rooms were clean, and there was great good-will, only, of course, one can't live upon good-will. There are certain small items that add so much to comfort that they should always be taken in any expedition to out-of-the-way places in Italy, where a stay of some length is contemplated.

First among these necessities, I would place tea, brandy (indispensable), and some English biscuits; a teapot and spirit-lamp. Next in order, a comfortable folding chair (I mean such a chair as folds up flat, and has a strip of canvas as a seat); for in many little mountain inns nothing more restful than a kind of wooden kitchen chair will be found. I have had one in constant summer use for fourteen years, and it as good to-day as when I bought it. I use it, when at home, in the garden, and when travelling, it slips into a canvas case or bag, buttoned at the opening, and goes with the luggage. A small deal book-box is a very great convenience and saves much unpacking.

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The one I have opens in front, and the doors slide back on a groove, and when closed are secured by a padlock. This, when taken out of its canvas travelling-cover, can stand on any small table, and it is such a convenience to have your books and newspapers ready at hand, directly you arrive at a place. To these I would add that, if not a particularly good sleeper, a *pillow* in a water-proof case is a real boon, as pillows in mountain inns are most chance things, and a pair of dark blue calico or linen blinds; by "blinds" I mean squares or oblongs of dark blue with a hem at the top, through which a tape or cord can be run, and the blinds fixed up over any windows at night; sometimes you find no *persiani*, and with the sun streaming in from an early hour, and bringing the inevitable following of flies, sleep is impossible. A mosquito netting should on no account be omitted, but if to these an india-rubber hot-water bottle be added in case of a sudden chill, I should consider the small travelling outfit complete.

The situation of Montefalco is delightful, and though it does not give one the impression of height (it really stands at an elevation of 1516 feet), the air is fresh and invigorating. This was my farthest point, and I engaged a carriage to take me across to Orvieto, stopping the night at Todi.

This is a beautiful drive, right through the wooded Umbrian country. One can also reach Todi by a good road from Perugia, and I believe that route takes one through a district equally beautiful, but I already knew the drive from Perugia to Chiusi, and as I par-

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ticularly wanted to see the Montefalco pictures, I preferred this route on that account. Todi is a place, lying as it does in the very heart of Umbria, entirely out of the ordinary foreigners' beat; in former years I had heard a great deal of it from poor old Fattorini, the artist in Rome, who used to do so much copying work for Lord Crawford; he was a Todi man, and it was a place I had noted as being "some day" to be visited. It dates from Etruscan times and stands in a magnificent situation; its chief *modern* treasure is a picture of Lo Spagna's, which is, I believe, considered the finest example of that master.

It was very late in the evening when we arrived at Todi, and I was dismayed to find that there was absolutely *no* inn. I believe there were some beds at a *trattoria*, but the entrance to it was so dirty and uninviting that I did not care to inspect them. Fortunately the regiment had left the previous day, and in the house of a jeweller I got a very good bedroom, which was engaged for the following day for one of the officers of the new regiment, and a place was found for my maid, who by this time was beginning to feel quite dejected. The jeweller piloted me about next morning; we got some food at the *trattoria*, and started at mid-day for another long, beautiful drive, reaching Orvieto as the sun was setting; and I was not sorry to find myself in a more civilized hotel than I had lately been used to.

From Orvieto I returned home, stopping one night at Castel Fiorentino, where again there was no inn, only rooms in a private house; and another night

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at Arezzo. My reason for these two last halts was that I very much wanted to see the Della Robbias at Fojano and Monte Sansovino, and I could only accomplish this in one long day, by an early start from Castel Fiorentino, driving to both places, and on to Arezzo. I have gone somewhat into detail about this trip, because it shows how much of interest may be accomplished in a very limited area, and at no great expense, but I have made no attempt at descriptions of such well-known pictures as are to be found in these places, much less of criticism on them, of which at present there is enough and to spare.

I could not have done it had the Junior Partner been in question ; for her ideas of decency and order would have received too many rude shocks, and I quite recognize that one must have a very absorbing interest in what one is seeing, to counterbalance the inevitable discomforts. Had the Absentee been with me, he would have enjoyed every hour of it, and after a winter in the Persian khan at Constantinople, followed by a summer in the monasteries of the Laura on Mount Athos and in company of the shepherds of Mount Olympus, the flesh-pots of Italy, even in very humble localities, would have appeared to him quite luxurious. But that year his chariot wheels tarried.

In very far-back years, he and I have had many good times together. One summer we remained in Rome all through June, spending Midsummer Eve on the great piazza outside the Lateran, where the *populani* banquet on eels and white wine ; and when the first of July came we chartered a little piazza trap

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and set off for Tivoli, Subiaco and Olevano, returning to Rome by Palestrina and the Castelli Romani.

We started again, on our way north, making a delightful detour to Civitâ Castellana. Excavations there had not then begun, and I think regretfully of all the buried treasures over which our feet must have strayed, and which are now to be seen in the Museum of the Villa Papagiulio outside the Porta del Popolo in Rome. From there we visited Nepi, Sutri, Caprara, Viterbo, driving from the last all the way to Orvieto, in blissful unconsciousness that that particular district was just then brigand-haunted, and that our friends in Rome were very unhappy about us. And in quite recent times we had one delightful outing to Lucca for the great annual *festa* of the *Volto Santo*, held there on the fourteenth of September. I travelled by the early morning train which was conveying the Archbishop of Florence and the pilgrims; they sang hymns all the way, and the effect was quite mediæval. I have never seen in any part of the world so beautiful and picturesque a scene as that *festa* was, the streets were full of colour and costume; the church choirs from Pisa and Pistoia go up to assist, and the music is really fine. Of course, at that season there are no *forestieri*, English, or other, wandering about, guide-book in hand; the whole scene is purely Italian, and one of local colour, and very beautiful the result is. The little town was crammed, and hardly any food was to be procured in the restaurants. I slept in a tiny room of the humblest description, which the Absentee had secured for me, and had himself occupied the previous

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day ; where he laid his own bones that night he never divulged.

Of course the kind of travelling I have been describing would be utterly unsuitable to British fathers of families, with daughters requiring civilized hotels, *tâble d'hôte* dinners, electric light, and a band of music all through lunch and dinner, as well as evenings in the "conversation" room. All these, and many other abominations of a similar kind, are to be found in the big hotels of the Engadine and other Swiss resorts. Not as yet having seen the Dalmatian coast, nor Bosnia and Servia, all that fascinating part of Eastern Europe, I feel there is still something to live for.

But, there is no doubt about it, such travelling as that should be done in youth, and not at an age when, however willing the spirit may be, the flesh is distinctly liable to be weak. *Speriamo bene.*

## *Chapter VII*

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### *Pros and Cons of Settling in Italy*

*Florence versus Rome—Some Old Time Folk—  
Some Practical Hints as to “Ways” and Prices  
Generally*

“Nothing extenuate nor ought set down in malice.”

“Inglese italiano, diavolo incarnato.”      *Italian proverb*

“I have been taught to my cost, and oh that this might increase my caution, and not my folly ! ‘Be wary’ saith one, ‘be wary ; keep to thyself what I tell thee,’ and whilst I hold my peace, and think it is secret, he cannot keep that secret which he desired should be kept, but presently betrayeth me and himself and goeth his way.

“From such chattering and indiscreet persons protect me. How good it is, and tending to grace, to be silent about others. Not to believe indifferently all that is said, nor too easily to spread reports.”

*The Imitation*

IT is a mystery to me why English people of wealth should buy villas in Italy, when they might occupy their own beautiful country houses at home for nine months of the year, and go to a really warm winter climate for the remaining three months. Of late years villas in Tuscany have been in such demand that it is now most difficult to get any kind of place at all. Save one or two palatial structures, that are only suited to royalty, few remain in the market. The two most conspicuous examples of these have been sold within the last six months.

When one comes to the question of “small means” it is a different matter, and there is much to be said

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in favour of Italy in such cases, especially when, by reason of death, or from other causes, the old home has been broken up, and there is no particular reason for living in one country rather than another.

Whenever it is a case of bringing up children, there can be no question of the advantage of their being kept at home in their own country ; and I constantly tell young people who "have come abroad to economize," that if they would only be content to live in England in the same way that they do in Italy, they could do it quite well, and the answer always comes — "Ah, but you know we *could* not do that." Now — "je me demande" — *Why* not ?

I am speaking now of young people of good family, and with a background of relations, family connections, and traditions. It certainly cannot be to the advantage of their children that the latter should grow up detached from these and all home ties, and return without a single taste or pursuit in accordance with the traditions of English country life. In many cases these young couples could have a cottage on the family property, with all kinds of advantages attaching to it, and I fail to see why there is anything disgraceful in keeping only one servant, or why makeshifts that are thought nothing of in Italy should be pronounced "impossible" at home.

The same thing applies to young men with a little capital investing it in land in Tuscany, instead of farming at home. I said once to one of these, "Why don't you take a farm at home, if you have decided on that line of life?" "Ah, well, you know, — farmers

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at home — *are not visited.*" This was quite a new view of the situation to me, and recalls an interview I had many years ago with a London house agent to whom I mentioned the price it would suit me to pay for the very small dwelling I required, after my old home was broken up. He looked compassionately at me, and said, "I don't think, madam, that what you will get at that rent will suit you at all."—"Why not?" I enquired, (the man knew me). "Ah well, you see, madam, your friends might not like to visit you in such a house as it would be." "In that case I am afraid they would have to stay away," I replied, in the spirit of an old London doctor who used to say he never would hesitate to walk down St. James's Street carrying a leg of mutton, because such of his friends as he happened to meet would know that he had a good reason for being so burdened, and that, as for those who did not know him, their opinion did not signify. That sort of question always appears to me to be very easily solved.

The expenses of living in Italy have increased enormously within the last thirty years, but probably that applies to every other civilized country. So far as the necessaries, I mean the beef and mutton necessaries, of life go, they are as cheap in London as in Florence or Rome, because, though many things cost less in those towns, the exorbitant duties in Italy on things which are really necessary for English ideas of comfort bring the average up and make it about equal.

Ten years ago, one could reckon the carriage and duty on general house stores, which we always have out

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from England, at about fifty per cent of their cost, but now they more often amount to eighty per cent on the original cost. Much of course depends on *what* you have out; the highest duties are on sugar, and on all articles into which sugar enters. I do not say it is necessary to get stores out in this way. Shops have improved greatly within the last few years, and for those living in a small town apartment it is probably better to buy in detail, and as they need. But it is quite different for people living in the country, and a good, well-filled store-room saves much trouble, and is, I think, much more economical.

Of course, if things are got out in this way, an agent must be employed to clear them at the custom house. I never employ any of the English or German agents, but prefer to go to an old-established Italian house, whose charges are much more moderate, and by whom I am much better, as well as much more pleasantly, served.

It is when one comes to the luxuries of life that the balance is in favour of the foreign settlement: air, sun, cleanliness, flowers, fruit, driving, all the little hundred and one things that make so great a difference in daily enjoyment. When I mention cleanliness, I am thinking of London, where, unless accustomed to the London standard of dinginess, it is the heaviest item of all in the year's budget.

To those who have been used to a London life, there is no place like it, with its perfect independence, the certainty of meeting every old friend you have in the world; there your bones can all be at-

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tended to by a specialist ; there each one can follow his own taste and pursuits, from attending Christy's auction rooms, or Quaritch's book sales, to slumming in the East End ; and there every convenience and comfort is within your reach so long as your balance at the bank is in a robust condition. But it must be London with a "hansom cab income," as the saying is, and, also, with the means to leave it, and not, as I hear most of my friends say when I am there, "I am going abroad next winter, *if I let my house.*"

Having myself passed through the phase of having to live, not in but *by* my house, I know all the worry that this kind of uncertainty involves, and I have had quite exceptional good fortune in always having it occupied by excellent tenants, and for long periods ; short lets spell ruin. And it would not be very agreeable, if your house remained *unlet*, to find yourself shut up in it, with perhaps an attack of serious illness, which you would probably have altogether escaped had you been in a better climate ; and for which you do not require your doctor to tell you that the only cure would be a journey to the south.

Also to make life in London pleasant, it must *be* London, by which I mean ten minutes from the Park, and not an outlying district ; and if you possess such a dwelling, and want it kept trim, bright, and smart, — a yearly coat of paint outside, frequent paperings and whitewashings and carpet liftings, white curtains, clean windows, and well-filled flower-boxes, — be the house ever so small, and your own knowledge of "dodges" sufficient to enable you to set about achiev-

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ing all these amenities in the most economical way, you will find, at the end of the year, that they are incompatible with "limited means."

Of living in the country in England in a small way, I have little or no experience, other than in a temporary way. If you can afford to carry London into the country, nothing can be more delightful, and nothing in the world more expensive. So, leaving that blissful condition on one side, and only speaking of quite small incomes, I confess I should have a very great dread of many things connected with that scheme of life.

Labour in England is so very expensive. To be in the country without a garden would be dreary, and, without some kind of a trap, impossible for people not accustomed to tramp on muddy roads. And to keep two outdoor men-servants would probably swamp the budget. I don't believe in having gardens and stables worked by the same pair of arms: the results in both cases are apt to be unsatisfactory. I see a good deal of small country settlements in the years that I go over to England, and I confess that it requires great elasticity of spirit to hold out against the thought of the unswept leaves in November swirling up to the door, of the whole country wrapt in white fog for days together, of the generally depressing atmosphere, and, shall I say it, the deadly dullness of the neighbours.

We were paying a visit once in the west of England, not at all in the wilds, but in a very populous and "residential" neighbourhood, and in a household

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singularly up-to-date as to all that was going on in the world. We had just returned from a winter in Egypt, and I had a great treasure in the shape of a huge necklace composed of strings of mummy beads which I had picked up at our different stopping-places up the Nile. The patient and tasteful fingers of the dear Junior Partner had put all these together in the most artistic manner: there were "evil eyes," and demons, and little gods and goddesses of every description, and it had quite an imposing effect. One evening when some visitors were coming to dinner, I wore this somewhat outlandish decoration, and after dinner it formed the subject of some remark, and explanations were carefully made to an old lady, a member of a leading "county family," but not by any means a person buried in the depths of the country, as she spent the winters in her town house in the elect vicinity of Eaton Square. She looked, she listened, and then she said solemnly: "Did not the dead people's relations object to their coffins being opened, and to the beads being taken out?" I don't know who spoke next, or what reply was made. I think that good Christian, our host, came to the rescue; I know I was voiceless.

Another time when we arrived in that same west of England to pay a visit near a cathedral city, we found the whole society convulsed by the hapless position of the bishop's wife, who in future was doomed to go in to dinner *fourth*, instead of third as heretofore. This sad state of things was caused by one of the canons having married an "Honourable," —

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most inconsiderate of him ! The dean was the Honourable and Reverend, one of the canons was a peer, so, by the charter of precedence, the wives of these two dignitaries walked in to dinner before the wife of the bishop, who, as a bishop's wife, has no standing on her own account. I may mention that the worthy man who was both a peer and a canon was in the habit of taking in to dinner his own married daughters, on such occasions as they visited him, to the exclusion of strangers bidden to the feast. This I always thought very bad form, but perhaps it was peculiar to that diocese.

A young friend of ours, brought up in Italy, married a doctor and went to live in his native Scotland. One day a luncheon party was given in honour of the foreign bride by a local magnate of the country town where her husband resided. Naturally the host took the bride in to table, greatly to the chagrin of the widow of a deceased "minister," who had been accustomed to the place of honour. When the signal to retire was given, this lady rose and flew to the door, which she managed to reach before any one else ; she turned and, glaring at the astonished bride, she hurled at her this remarkable statement : "In this country *D.D.s* take precedence of *M.D.s*."

So much for "precedence" in various professions and ranks of life, and I confess that if one had to spend his life in an English country parish, and take things from the point of view of either the county or the diocese, especially the diocese, it would be very dull indeed. It would be long before one

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would hear a remark so pat as was made one day to the Junior Partner by the old lady mentioned in my chapter on Barga as sitting for fifty years on a Tuscan hillside. That young person had lost a button off her jacket in our old friend's room, and on its being found and returned, she thanked the old lady with effusion, saying it was so tiresome to put a button on a jacket that did not belong to it. "Yes, my dear, to be sure, just like introducing an illegitimate child into the family," was the prompt reply of this old party, who doubtless had had ample opportunities of judging of the effect of the latter arrangement during her long residence in Tuscany; what is sometimes termed a *figlio di capriccio*, a most elegant and expressive phrase.

The ideal condition of residence is to have the *home* in England, and to be able to leave it for the winter or spring months, if by reason of long habit sunshine has become a necessity of existence. But when that ideal is beyond attainment, and when one has to choose a place of exile, Italy appears to me, taking it all round, to afford greater compensations than any other country. I do not say the *country* in Italy, for that must entirely depend on people's own idiosyncrasies. Personally, I always feel that if I had the misfortune to live in a town, I would on every account prefer that town to be Rome rather than Florence.

The climate of Rome is greatly superior, being less cold in winter, and much less hot in summer, as after three o'clock P.M. there is always a sea-breeze. Everything is just a little cheaper than in Florence,

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with the one large and important exception of house rent, which is quite three times as much in actual cost, and only half as good in point of quality ; and, that being so, any little advantage gained in other ways is more than swamped in the price paid for houseroom. But Rome, formerly so *mal vue* on account of its reputation for fever, etc., is now one of the best drained, best watered, and most healthy cities in Europe. There is no blue like the blue of a Roman sky. If the weather is bad there, you may be sure it is much worse in every other place, and for children and old people the climate is most salubrious.

But Rome is a special taste, and to the generality of English people, modern-minded people especially, Florence, with its numerous wide open streets, its more cheerful aspect, its sharp, exhilarating air, its shoals of fellow-country people, and its beautiful environs of garden country, is generally much more attractive, especially to people in the prime of life, and free from any delicacy of chest or throat. It is no place for invalids, unless, indeed, in some cases of that very chance complaint, asthma.

As regards the foreign society to be found in it, tastes and opinions, of course, differ widely. Before settling in Tuscany, I had heard the remark that English society in Florence was for the most part so unpleasant, that every one did his best to keep out of it, and that if you wished to make a mortal enemy, you had only to offer to introduce one person to another. On the other hand, you will often be told that in no

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corner of creation are so many agreeable and well-informed people to be found within the same area.

Without endorsing either view, one may say that it is rather too microscopic and given to cliques, and that like many other places, as long as you do good unto yourself, men will speak well of you ; also, that if the Hebrew Psalmist lived here to-day, he would have no occasion to bewail that his acquaintance were hid out of his sight. At the same time, it is a place where people may lie *perdu* for years, if such is their will and pleasure ; which seems rather a contradiction in terms, but to the truth of which, I am sure, every old resident in it can bear testimony.

As regards Italian society, I have known so little of its higher ranks that I have no right to offer an opinion of its merits. Thirty years ago the Roman aristocracy formed a caste completely apart, admission into which was rarely to be gained by outsiders, save by members of the old English Roman Catholic families. But of late years there have been so many Anglo-Roman and American-Roman alliances that the old barriers have been broken down, and the younger generation of the Roman nobility are much more decentralized.

In Florence there is little effort at assimilation between Italians and English: the point of view differs in *toto*. Italian society is given to very late hours, and high play is its chief aim and object.

In all the years of our Tuscan residence I have only known one Florentine leader of fashion, and one Italian *grande dame*; the former was of Anglo-Italian birth

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and married to a Belgian nobleman, so that the society of her salon was of the most cosmopolitan description. The other belonged to the noble Savoian house of Pia, and was a cousin of King Humbert. Herself of a charming simplicity of manner and goodness of heart, she married a man who, apart from his social position and ancient lineage, was a well-known scholar and Dantista, and would always have been distinguished for his literary attainments. So anxious were they that the two children born to them should spend their childhood in a simple country life, that they made what to them was a great sacrifice, gave up literary and musical society, and spent some years in a country villa, educating this only son and daughter. Where the fault lay I do not know, perhaps there was some taint of heredity in the background, but the daughter, married to a Tuscan duke, was stopped by the *fattore* just as she was leaving her home to join her lover, having with her all the family jewels ; and the son, the present Marchese, after a disastrous marriage, and after having gambled away not only his whole fortune, but the beautiful old *palazzo* of his ancestors, with the family portraits by Van Dyke let into its walls, was, when I last heard of him, driving a cab in the streets of Genoa. I do not for a moment mean to say that this family history is a fair sample of the higher classes in Italy, but it is the only one I have had the opportunity of knowing. The poor old Marchesa died heart-broken some years ago, after spending her last years in vainly attempting to rescue her grandsons from the pernicious atmosphere of their home surroundings.

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Nowadays Florence may be said to be one vast pension, it was totally different when I first knew it in the sixties; such places hardly existed then, and if they had, the class of English visitors of that day would not have gone into them. Many of them were badly off,—Irish without rents, and so on; but it would not have occurred to them to herd with other people. Their apartment might be of the tumble-down shanty order, with hardly a *donna di faccenda* to attend to their few wants, and if they required extra cups and saucers, on occasions when friends dropped in to tea, they probably bought them from the green-grocer round the corner. At that time everything was to be found where you least expected it: I have seen beautiful old frames hanging outside a fruiterer's shop, and bits of old lace and fine needlework among the hoards of the rag and bone pickers. Though those times are gone for ever, Florence remains the best "picking up" place in Italy.

Gone too is the society of that day, gone the learned and cultivated American diplomatist, in whose hospitable villa were to be met the people best worth knowing of all nationalities,—all were welcome there who were interested in human progress, or engaged in any work for the good of the neighbour;—and to know him and his charming wife might well be said to constitute a liberal education. Gone too the cheery old cleric, who for so many years ministered to the English congregation in the Via Lamarmora, and whose unfailing tact and courtesy stand out in strong contrast to what one sometimes sees nowadays. I remember this old

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gentleman and his wife coming out one day to see us and to revisit the scenes they knew so well; it was in the month of April and a slight shower fell as we were walking in the park. "My dear," said the one to the other, "we are keeping our hostess in the rain, let us go." In this decade I should expect to hear, "Let us go, because we *are getting wet.*" How astonished this couple would have been could they have heard a successor, when addressing an influential member of his congregation, speak of "that pestilent ladies' committee."

Gone also is the gracious and dignified representative of a Highland clan, on whose tombstone in the Allori are inscribed the words, "Daughter of a Scottish Chieftain." No one who enjoyed, as I did, the privilege of her friendship is ever likely to forget her: so kind, so genial, so appreciative of any little attention during the long years when she sat waiting for death. One day I was relating to her a case of "invincible ignorance" on the part of a woman of good family, to whom I had chanced to remark that it was very interesting to meet, here in Tuscany, as I had lately done, lineal descendants of Sir Horace Mann. It is always very unpleasant when one has fired a gun too high, and I was disconcerted when the person addressed said blandly that she had never heard of Sir Horace Mann. To cover my retreat I said hastily that I meant Horace Walpole's Horace Mann; but the lady averred that Horace Walpole was equally unknown to her, and I gave it up in great confusion.

My old friend, sitting with a peerage on the book-

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shelf at her side, was greatly shocked ; " My dear," she said, " who could that very ignorant person have been ? " For once I disregarded the Spanish rule to " mention the miracle, but never the name of the saint," and imparted it to her in deepest confidence. She lifted her hands, quite pained : " Ah, my dear, and quite a good name too " ; she held strongly to *noblesse oblige* in all things.

Another who has left this scene was my own *pae-sana* from the Scottish border, who, in the days of her youth, when a census was being taken in our native Eskdale, wrote after her name " Spinster, more's the pity," to the great scandal of the whole countryside. She carried the same frank mode of speech into later years, when, as the wife of the German ambassador at the Court of St. James, the ways of diplomacy were a heavy burden to her ; and our gracious Queen is reported to have said, after one visit at Windsor, that either *she* or Madame Von — must leave the country. She was a Providence for all needy artists, musicians, and out-at-elbows people generally.

All these robust-natured people, and many others, have passed away, and almost the only surviving notability of that period is the "Lady Joan" of Ouida's classic pages. She no longer traffics in "Murillos" and "Peruginos" with the names of these painters inscribed in large gold letters on their frames,— all to be sold for the benefit of distressed Italian families,— but has turned her attention to pastoral pursuits, and places her oil and wine on the English market, no doubt as much to the advantage of her customers as to her

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own, which could hardly be said of the old line of business.

Most of the villas in the neighbourhood of Florence now belong to wealthy English, American and German families, with the inevitable sprinkling of old Indian civilians who by reason of long exile have become citizens of no country in particular; and in many cases the end and aim of all this class appears to be to try to reproduce all the most tiresome features of the society it has left behind.

If these dwellers in marble halls, fortunate owners of large salons, and "grounds" sufficiently ample to accommodate the overflow, choose to sacrifice one day in the week or month for the benefit of their friends, resident or travelling, they deserve nothing but gratitude from the public. But when the spinster in her cheap pension signifies that she too has her "day," in happy memory of Bayswater and South Kensington, I ask, can absurdity further go?

No one should venture on taking an apartment in Florence, in even a temporary way, without having had competent professional advice as to its sanitary condition. A little trouble and money laid out in this way beforehand may save hundreds of pounds, to say nothing of bitter but unavailing regrets. The sanitary state of many apartments, even those in the best situations of the town, baffles description.

I had one friend who, if not born in Florence, had lived in it from her earliest childhood, and might, therefore, have been supposed to know the necessity of thorough examination of any new quarters. The

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first apartment in which I knew her was a ground-floor in one of the most charming squares, open and airy, and had a small garden attached to it, where her dogs could air themselves. Going one Friday to see her, knowing that I should find her at home on that afternoon, she received me with—"So glad you did not come last Friday (they were emptying the *pozzo nero*), and the smell was so awful, I told the porter not to admit anyone."

For years she lived in those rooms with the cesspool for the whole house right below the floor of her drawing-room! From this she removed to a newly built house on one of the Viales; which, as she told me, she gave up, after sitting the best part of the winter in it clad in a sealskin jacket. The walls were about the thickness of one brick, and if you put your hand against them, you felt the cold air whistling through. The next move was to a beautiful suite of rooms in an old *palazzo*, full south, and delightful in every way, save for the trifling item that you could not remain in the rooms for more than half an hour without opening a window to let out the foul air. This also had to be given up. The last move was to another old *palazzo* with none of the *agréments* of the former one, and presumably even worse sanitary conditions, for my poor friend left it to join her family in London, for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, feeling very ill, but under the impression that she required a skilful dentist. Had her own doctor been in Florence, I do not suppose he would have allowed her to start. At her first halting-place she was met by a friend to whom she had tele-

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graphed to bring a dental surgeon to see her. She was informed that she was mistaken, and must have immediate medical aid. An operation in the throat was performed, but she died in forty-eight hours of "virulent blood-poisoning." The miracle was that she had so long escaped this fate. Now this may be an extreme case, but I have known of many others where death or life-long illness has been the penalty of neglect of the simplest sanitary precautions. It is not only in town apartments that these hidden dangers lurk. In taking an old Tuscan villa, it is every whit as necessary to have a capable surveyor, and the houses that do not require thorough overhauling are few indeed.

In the matter of house-room, Florence is a paradise for single people; with the exception of Paris, in no other city with which I am acquainted can a "one man" or a "one woman" apartment be found so easily, or at so moderate a rental. But it should be kept in view, when calculating the latter, that it will not cover, much more than half the year, as, if the apartment is suited for winter occupation, the ordinary Briton, who puts up an umbrella when the first warm sun falls on his back, will probably require to bolt in June, if not in May, and will not care to return before November.

The service required in such a *quartiere* will also cost very little. If people are content with mediocre performances in cooking and in waiting, it is easy to find a good *donna di faccenda*. The Tuscan "general" is distinctly superior to her English equivalent, and probably adds a knowledge of ironing to her other

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qualifications, though a great distinction is drawn between being able to iron *con amido* (with starch), and without it.

It is astonishing how many Englishwomen of small means there are living here in respectability and comfort in their own small *étage*, who, if in London, would be in comfortless suburban lodgings, or in two rooms in one of those "ladies' flats" to which all sorts of drawbacks and restrictions are attached. In Florence everything lends itself to their independence, and if they are hospitably inclined, and wish to ask their friends to little luncheons or teas, the best of viands can be had, at quite reasonable prices, from a restaurant or confectioner; and when the time for escaping the hot season comes round, they intimate to their domestic that she can either retire to her home in the mountains, or look out for temporary service till the autumn. The upholsterer is called in, he removes the carpets, beats them, returns them well saturated with camphor or naphthaline, and packed in tidy canvas wrappers; the furniture is covered up—probably there is not much of value, the key is turned in the door, and the owner can start with an easy mind for her *villeggiatura* in Italian Apennines or Swiss mountains, or join relations in England, as the case may be, secure in the knowledge that when she returns in the late autumn, and summons her "general," she will find her possessions intact, and the first rough cleaning put through before she arrives. Of course, no one would be so foolish as to go away for the summer months leaving valuable silver plate in a locked-up apartment. Any-

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thing of that kind can always be sent to the bank. Italians often pawn their valuables at the Monte di Pietà; this plan has the double advantage of ensuring their safety and supplying some funds in hand for the journey.

Some few of these spinsters belong to the genuine old-maid class of British, the female of the past generation, who, void of intellectual resources, and somewhat soured by adverse fate, finds her happiness only in gossip and scandal, and is the terror of the community. But there are many of a different order, especially among the younger generation, many of whom have their own little studio or workshop, and make, either by copying in the galleries or in one or other of the many branches of decorative art now so much in vogue, quite a nice addition to their means. I have known those who in this way arrived at the very respectable figure of £100 a year; and some who always have more orders than can be carried out in one season, for their beautiful embroidery and wood-carving or book-binding.

Of course I am well aware how much is now being done by women in England in these several branches of decorative art, and that it is not necessary to come to Italy to pursue them, or to find congenial occupations. But on the whole, I think a single woman without any special home ties, and with a very narrow income, can live in Florence under more favorable conditions than she can either in London or in an English provincial town. Provided with a nice small apartment and a good servant, she will find an

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excellent library, a choice of spiritual directors under whom she can devote herself to works of charity and benevolence, or, if of sufficiently robust fibre to eschew "services" and "teas," those great twin absorbents of time and disturbers of peace, she may find time to live her own life and will have no difficulty in discovering others much worse off than herself, to whom she can be a good Samaritan; and sometimes the rich as well as the poor have need of a "little sister."

If she can combine her Italian *pied-à-terre* with a visit to England, say every second year, she will be able to keep in touch with home friends and interests, which on every account is very desirable, and prevents people from reaching the point which one old lady I knew arrived at, viz., revisiting her native land after an absence of twenty years, when, as she herself put it, "It was like going to a foreign country, with the advantage of knowing the language."

I have treated this question of settling in Tuscany from the most prosaic point of view, but to some of us it is not only or altogether a question of expediency or of small economies,—it is Italy! One cannot define the undefinable, nor explain the witchery; it will mean different things to different people; but the old fable, of those returning to Rome who had drunk of the Fountain of Trevi, remains true for other places, and in many ways.

It is Italy. There is no more to be said.

## *Chapter VIII*

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### *Tuscan Courts of Justice*

"You often hear man making the somewhat simple complaint, that he only wants justice. Only justice ! why justice requires time, insight and goodness. — No, — justice ! look not for it till you are in a state of being, for which you will hardly say that you are yet quite fit — you are on earth: and men are unjust to you. How ludicrous the complaint."

*Arthur Helps*

"Blessed are they that expect little, for they shall not be disappointed."

I WAS looking over some old papers the other day, and, in doing so, came upon some memoranda referring to various experiences of Tuscan law-courts. These memoranda I had gained in past years, and the recollection of them had almost passed from my mind. I imagine that not many *forestieri* have had the misfortune of figuring on three several occasions in a Tuscan court of law, and as the causes which led to my appearing in them throw a very curious light on several phases of everyday life in Tuscany, I think they may not only be of some interest to possible British residents here, but also be of some use in indicating what they had better do and what leave undone.

To make the narration of any one of these occasions intelligible I must go back to the winter of 1885, when we had joined some old friends on the seaboard of the Italian Riviera. These friends were Dr. and Madame Z—. Dr. Z— was a Tuscan by birth and education, but in character was really more of the old Roman type. He belonged to the "48" epoch, and

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dent in one of the most scandalous divorce cases that has ever disgraced English society. That these people were total strangers to him, and that he knew no more of the merits of the case than he had gathered from the newspaper reports of the trial, in no wise deterred him from expressing to her his admiration for her noble-minded *futur*, and his sympathy with him in the shameful treatment he had received at the hands of an English judge and jury !

It would have been difficult for the most conventional-minded person to have spent his life with Dr. Z—— and *not* acquire the habit of taking a different view of things from that of the world in general ; but Madame Z—— was herself a person of the most original turn of mind, and she and her husband were alike in their love of argument, and in their faculty for seeing things as they were *not*. At the end of a long argument, the discovery that the foundation *fact* was quite different from what had been imagined was never allowed to upset the theories that had been elaborately piled upon it. I remember on one of these occasions, — some one or other was under discussion, and, given the point that this some one was an Italian and a Roman Catholic, a very fine theory was constructed. I heard it all patiently, before saying, “Dearest L., you forget, I think, that Monsieur ‘*Chose*’ is neither an Italian nor a Roman Catholic, but a German Jew!” “Ah, già!” replied Madame Z——, “and so he is; yes, I certainly *did* forget that.” But it did not seem to occur to her that the facts not fitting the theories made any difference

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in the force of the arguments used; and the only result of my interposition was, that a bystander who happened to be of both German and Jewish descent, went away mortally offended at these dual nationalities having been alluded to in her presence!

It will be easily understood that dulness was not likely to be a factor in our intercourse with the Z— family. In fact, in their mental stable-yard so many steeds were kept ready saddled and bridled, that it was always an uncertainty which one would be next trotted out; on one occasion, when an unusually high-stepper was mounted, and I had written to the Absentee to express my views, his reply was, “What surprises me is that *you* should be surprised.” It was always the unexpected that was offered for your acceptance.

In one of my experiences of Tuscan courts of justice, I was the defendant.

During the summer before the “Finding of the Garden,” when I was temporarily inhabiting a portion of the old Republican villa on the south side of Florence, I had for cook and general slavey a certain Antonietta; I cannot remember through whom, in Florence, she came to me, probably from that general emporium of servants, the English baker. This woman was an excellent cook, her sole à la Normande, in particular, would have done credit to the Café Voisin, and I had no complaints to make of her *spese*. But she was dirty and slatternly in her appearance indoors, and abroad was so bedizened with feathers in her hat, the favourite form of extreme fashion among a certain

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class of Florence domestics, that she looked positively disreputable; and I had decided I would not take her to our new abode, but it had been settled that she was to remain till I left.

However, a few days before that date she informed me she had taken an apartment in town, and intended to furnish it with such household goods and chattels as she possessed, which had been stored while she had been in my service, and take lodgers for the winter; and, in view of this, she must leave me at once. Now the law of Tuscan service is fifteen days' notice to be given before departure, or forfeiture of wages, and I reminded her of this, and told her I would not pay her a farthing of the small sum owing to her, unless she completed her term of service with me: we had all our household things to pack up, and it was too inconvenient to be left in this way. I had of course paid her wages monthly, and had given her money from day to day for whatever she had bought for me; but a day or two after she left, a butcher from the market presented a bill, of which I forgot the amount, but which he said my cook had not paid him. I explained the situation to the man, a very well-known tradesman, and he departed vowing vengeance on Antonietta. A day or two later that worthy returned with a demand for the residue of her wages, and I of course fell upon her in the matter of the butcher, whose receipt I said I must have.

After visiting friends for a few days, I came to my new abode, and then did a very foolish thing. In spite of my imperfect knowledge of Italian grammar

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which is a much more difficult thing than it is generally supposed to be, I wrote a letter to Antonietta, saying that if I did not hear that the butcher was paid, I should mention the matter to her friend the English baker, and in that case, all the world would know her for what she was, "a woman not honest." I translate literally. In the course of a few days I received a summons, at the hands of Antonietta, to appear in a certain police court in Florence, on the charge of having libelled her character!

Now in Tuscany libel is punished, not by fines, but by imprisonment. The Z—s were not in town at the time, and I betook myself to a most kind Italian friend who had helped me in the taking of my house, and in every possible way; together we went to see the lawyer he had recommended to me to draw up the house contract. Both men scolded me severely for ever having put pen to paper to such a woman; she could not read, but had evidently taken my composition to an attorney of a very low order, who had suggested to her that there might be money to be made out of it. We presented ourselves in court, the butcher was produced, he of course had been squared, and swore to having been paid to the uttermost farthing. The baker was also on the scene, looking much ashamed of his friend Antonietta.

But there was no getting over the fact that I had used the verb to know in the future tense, "will know you," instead of, as it should have been expressed, in the conditional, "would know you." But a lawyer is a tower of strength, and mine slipped on

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his gown, and, in the twinkling of an eye, poured out in the most eloquent phrases the assurance that the whole matter turned on the ignorance (so pardonable in a *Signora forestiera*) of the difference between one tense of a verb and another. The judge had grasped the situation, and accepted this view, the more willingly that Antonietta, in the course of the proceedings, had used "language" to him of a most impressive description ; and I had the satisfaction of hearing him inform her that she was a disgrace to Florentine service, and of knowing that her friend the baker forbade her further entry within the door of his shop. But it was well laid into me never again to afford a Tuscan cook such a loophole for prosecution, and I pass the lesson on to any whom it may interest or who may be likely to profit by it.

My next, and I devoutly trust my last appearance in a Tuscan court of law, was on the remarkable ground of *not* having engaged a cook. Surely the very oddest plea on which to found a summons.

In the summer of 1887 we were leaving home for some months ; the cook we had had for some time was excellent in his professional capacity but of so violent a temper that my son, who was spending the summer with me, thought it really not safe for us to continue him when we were only women in the house. As this individual had always the option of a summer hotel engagement, there was no hardship in my dismissing him. He went to personal friends of ours, and did well when under male control, but a year or two after it was discovered that he drank to excess, which

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accounted for his violence. On our return in autumn I had to find another cook, and, as I had that year an invalid friend under my care, it was important to me to get a cook superior to one that would have sufficed for ourselves alone.

I engaged a man of good education, and thoroughly proficient, who stipulated that in the event of his former padrone returning to Florence he should be at liberty to re-enter his service. We made no objection to this, and we were rejoiced to think there was a prospect of comfort and tranquillity in the house, for the cook is always the back-bone of the establishment.

Exactly one week had expired, when he informed me that, in consequence of an urgent telegram from relations, he must immediately proceed to Milan. In two days he returned, and without delay announced that he had accepted an engagement in a wealthy Milanese family, at a salary double that which he received from me, and that he was happy to recommend to us a cousin of his own, a youth of twenty-two. We declined this offer, and informed him that if he so neglected to give fifteen days' notice, he would forfeit all claim to any remuneration for the week's service which he had performed. He cheerfully acquiesced, and departed within forty-eight hours.

Now I am, in household matters, placed on the retired list, the Junior Partner and I being perfectly *d'accordo* as to the non-advisability of two padrone, and, as she manages the kitchen department entirely, I am kept as a kind of figure-head, and only

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brought out to view on occasions of great solemnity or delinquency, when extra impressiveness is desirable. But just then, some slight ailment prevented her from going out, and so it fell to me to hunt up candidates for her inspection. There being no recognised and business method of engaging servants in Florence, I proceeded to go the round of our tradespeople, and state our requirements; and on my way into town I stopped at a fruiterer's with whom we occasionally dealt, and enquired if he had any candidates to recommend. He mentioned *un certo Fazzi*, and it was arranged that he would send for this man to see me at the door of his shop towards six o'clock, as I returned home. Meeting Madame Z——, I explained the situation to her and she strolled along with me and together we interviewed Fazzi, not inside the shop itself, which was under an arcade, but in front of it, on the pavement. I explained the conditions of our service to this man, who was eager to be engaged then and there; but he had brought no certificates with him, and I told him I would let him know if we wished him to come up to see the Signorina. The fruiterer came out for a few minutes, and joined in the conversation, but no one else did, and we were all standing too far distant from the inside of the shop to make it possible for any one within it to hear what was said.

Next day I called at the shop and asked the fruiterer to let Fazzi know he could come up to be interviewed by the Signorina; he presented himself the next morning, and the Junior Partner who, equally

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with the Absentee, has the gift of tongues to an unusual degree, and is an excellent Italian scholar, went into details with him, explained the kind of service, etc., with great precision, and added that if we decided on him he would be required at once, but that she had other candidates to interview, and must reserve her decision, which, however, would be conveyed to him by myself at six o'clock that evening at the same shop where I had previously met him. As there was a gap of *four years* in which this man could or would give no account of himself, we selected another candidate, and, at the hour appointed, I went into town to let Fazzi know we should not require his services. In accordance with the English custom of paying a railway or omnibus fare in similar circumstances, I handed the man a franc, saying I knew he had had a long walk out to our house. The *mancia* was rejected with scorn, and he poured out such a volley of abuse that I congratulated myself on the escape we had had. A week later our amazement may be imagined when we received a *citazione* at the suit of Fazzi, cook, for thirty francs for board and wages, for fifteen days, in consequence of breach of contract of his engagement with us !

I promptly went to the lawyer, who had some twelve months before so ably delivered us from the toils of Antonietta, and showed him the paper, narrating what had occurred, and asked his advice in so novel a position. He shrugged his shoulders, and said the man evidently belonged to the class who had everything to gain and nothing to lose, and that I

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had no occasion whatever for his services; I had only to go to the police court and tell the magistrate the story as I had narrated it to him, and there would be no difficulty in the matter. We acted on his advice and, accompanied by Madame Z——, presented ourselves in the police court, where the Junior Partner and I were examined separately. Fazzi had brought no witnesses, and was informed he must procure them, and the case was adjourned for a week to enable him to do so.

On our second attendance in court Madame Z—— was too unwell to accompany us. The cook brought a man who had been passing on the pavement outside the fruiterer's shop when I was explaining what wages I gave, and what the duties were, and an errand boy belonging to the shop, too young to be sworn, and who, during his examination by the judge, contradicted himself repeatedly. The judge then informed Fazzi that his witnesses were useless, and that the case, as it then stood, must be given against him, unless he chose to adjourn it again, and bring the fruiterer as a witness; but he carefully refrained from intimating to us that we had the legal right to demand its settlement then and there, and of this we were of course quite ignorant, nor did he make the slightest suggestion to us, as foreigners, that we had better perhaps call our lawyer.

At the end of another week, we, for the third time, left our country residence at an inconveniently early hour. Madame Z—— accompanied us, and later on Dr. Z—— (who, although I was still in great dis-

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favour, was quite unable to resist having a finger in such a legal ploy as this) joined us at the court. The fruiterer was unable to leave his shop, or, more probably, did not choose to come forward. His brother attended, but his evidence was refused as I had never seen him. A hunchback employed as messenger in the shop then swore to a tissue of lies, said that I, *in* the shop and *in* his hearing, had engaged Fazzi as cook, and had desired him to come next morning to receive the Signorina's orders, and repeated his lesson so badly that the cook made frantic efforts to prompt him,—“Oh no, no, per amor di Dio, per carità”—accompanied by wild gesticulations. The scene was highly dramatic—the judge sat and looked on, observing that each one, with the exception of the two *forestiere*, contradicted himself, and that they told their story and stuck to it throughout. Madame Z—— in the exercise of a strong phrenological bias, spoke smooth things to the cook, and assured him he had made quite a mistake; a row of beggars on a back bench, who constituted the audience, took up the parable, and said “Ah poor devil, that's it, he's made a mistake, but these good Signore will give him *qualche cosa*.”

The cook, awaking to a full sense of the position, clasped his head with both hands, and cried: “*Per Bacco*, and so it seems I was wrong after all, and *who's to pay for the citazione?*”

Meantime Dr. Z—— had stepped up to the magistrate's table and had a few minutes' conversation with him, when the latter informed him that the man

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had no case at all, but that he supposed these ladies would give him something. Dr. Z—— promptly negatived this idea, saying that to English people such a course would be tantamount to owning they had been in the wrong throughout. Sentence was deferred, and all parties left the court.

On the thirty-first of October it was given in favour of the cook ; but not till the ninth of November were we served with a notice to pay the amount claimed, with the addition of the costs. We at once betook ourselves to the lawyer, Signor S——, to request him to institute an appeal ; and were then informed that for sums under forty or fifty francs, in that court, there was no appeal. The astuteness of the cook in fixing the lower amount of his claim became apparent. On our expressing our regret to Signor S—— that, in the first instance, he should have given the counsel he did, we were told that we should have sent round for him as soon as we saw that perjured witnesses were brought forward. Now the only course open to us would be to prosecute for perjury, which would cost from forty to fifty pounds, and be very difficult to prove.

Now two things in connection with this trial are quite certain ; the first is, that it was the fact of my offering the cook a franc that suggested to him the possibility of getting up a case against us ; he could not imagine our doing such a thing unless from the motive of feeling that he had a claim upon us, for he had probably worked himself up into a certainty of belief that he was engaged by us ; and the other is that, had Dr. Z—— acquiesced in the magistrate's

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suggestion, that we should bestow a gratuity upon the man as a compensation for his disappointment, the verdict would have been different. Of that there is no doubt. The argument here, in such a case, would have been, not the question of the abstract justice or merit of it, but that the loss to me would be of much less importance than to the other party.

I may add that Madam Z—— made some enquiries about our plaintiff, and finding that a relation of his, a very respectable man, was in the service of some friends of her own, she one day took occasion to speak of the matter, and had an interview with Fazzi himself, when in reply to her query how he, a member of a respectable family, could have behaved as he had done, the man, in effect, admitted his wrongdoing and gave the usual excuse made here, that "the devil had got into him."

This account is not written from memory, for I have kept all the papers connected with it, including the *citazione* and a letter written to our lawyer, either by the magistrate or by his representative, containing some statements as to some remarks alleged to have been made to us during the trial, which are, let us say, unfounded.

The importance of always, when possible, having a witness in Tuscany, to any matter of business, such as engaging a servant or dismissing one, is hardly to be overrated. The value of such a precaution will easily be understood, and I think any foreigner taking up house here will do well to order his steps so warily that it will be impossible for him to have any

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experience of the Tuscan administration of justice, as practised in the Florentine tribunal;<sup>1</sup> and it is also most necessary to obtain from any one leaving your services, who has had any payments to make on your behalf, a written acknowledgment to the effect that you have paid him every item entered in his book of "spesi."

<sup>1</sup> Written characters of servants are of no value at all in this country,—no Italian family would accept them.



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## *Chapter IX*

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### *After Long Years*

*The Garden of To-Day—A Tuscan Summer*

July. I don't remember what statesman it was who started the theory that the man who made no mistakes never made anything else. This is a consoling doctrine for amateur makers of gardens, most of whom know what it is to realize how much better a garden plan could be carried out, if it had to be done over again. Still, when all my own failures, mistakes, and shortcomings have been reckoned up, when I look out upon the garden as it is to-day, and think of the piece of waste land of which I took possession fourteen years ago, there is a distinct balance to the good, as there well may be.

As I have already said, from the middle of February to the end of June, the garden is a succession of beautiful pictures. But after that date, when the glories of the first flowerings of snowdrop and scilla, the hyacinths of March, the early double tulips of April and the scent of Banksia and wistaria, when the azaleas of May have gone by, and the callas and imantophyllums have been removed to the shade and obscurity of the north side, when the border roses and Spanish irises are all past and the stately madonna lilies have been picked, when the Rhynchospermum jasminoides has finished its long flowering, when all these joys of scent and colour have gone by, then there comes a season when the garden is a memory

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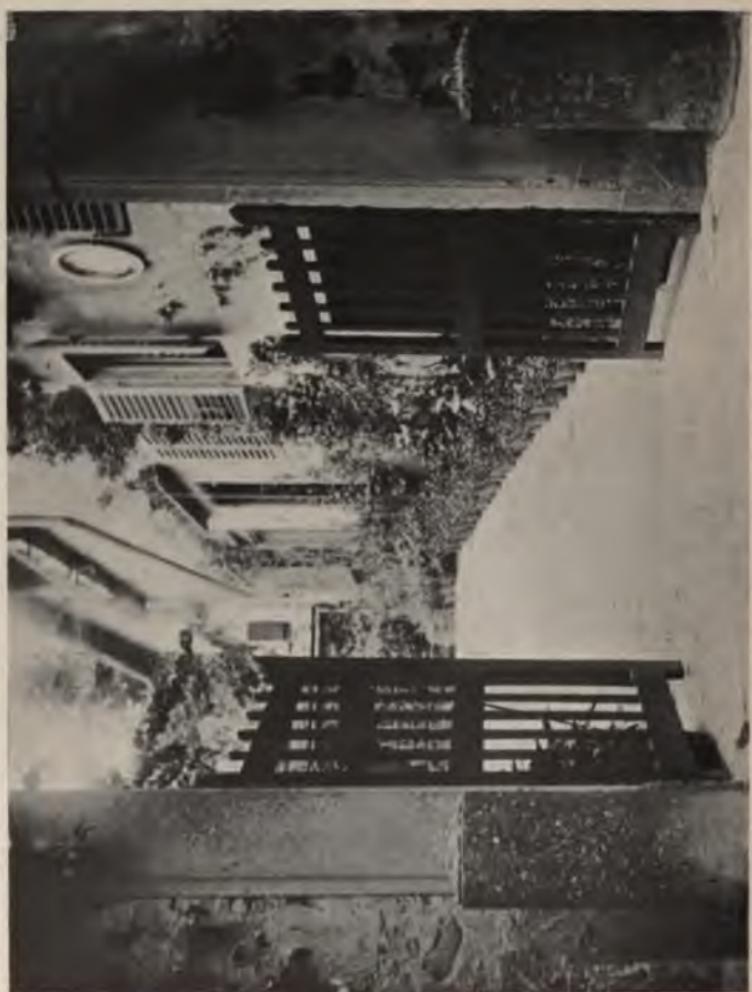
### *After Long Years*

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## *Chapter IX*

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and a hope, rather than a place to be enjoyed in the present, and a kind of fallow time ensues when it and you exist but do not live; when one's mind turns regretfully to the herbaceous borders of the north, and longs for the English turf, cool and fresh and green. You know that in September the balance will be in your favour, and that there will probably be a good three months when you will again have the advantage of sun and climate. But in July and August, it is apt to be all vanity and vexation of spirit, especially when aggravated, as in our case, by a very short water supply.

Your gardener, too, probably feels defrauded of a period—not indeed of relaxation of work, for he is industrious enough, but of a slack time in which, you having elected to remain on the premises eating the fruit of your own vine and fig-tree rather than freeze among Swiss glaciers, he cannot indulge himself with a relapse into the untidy ways so dear to the Tuscan mind. The present incumbent, "Mr. Eugenio," has a perfect talent for disorder, and never seems capable of clearing up completely any matters I may point out as being *urgente*; there is safe to be at least one pot or little heap of dead leaves left unremoved, and if I go and point this out, he is apt to be much aggrieved. A friend, who has one of the best and most orderly Tuscan gardeners I have yet come across, declares that the great use of an "at home day," that scourge of the British resident in Italy, is that it compels a weekly tidying up in the garden.

This year, thanks to the abundant rains of April

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and May, there is not the usual scorched-up appearance, and this is how the garden appears, as you turn from the avenue into the court-yard.

To begin with the chief of my mistakes, in the two stone pillar casings that flank the entrance I planted Banksia roses for grafting. Had I known as much then as I do now about the requirements of roses in this climate I never would have attempted these in so airless a situation. Had *Rhynchospermum jasminoides* been substituted the side of the house would have been covered with it, and it would have dominated the Virginian creeper which hangs in graceful, if scentless, profusion from the old archway. The wistaria, however, is making its way, and the roses that have been grafted on the Banksia above the arch are some of the best we have. Beneath the arch is suspended a beautiful specimen of old iron work picked up in North Italy, where it was adorning a contadino's yard; as I have not yet succeeded in finding an old glass lamp to fit it, it holds a pot of *Asparagus sprengeri pro temp.*

Passing up into the court-yard, you see that the front of the house is now almost entirely creeper-clad. *Ampelopsis Veitchi*, *pace* Mrs. Earle, forms a groundwork, a pure white passion flower is in full bloom, while beyond it is my greatest treasure, a *Niphetos* rose grafted on a Banksia, for whose benefit a kind of sham iron balcony has been erected; this runs along under the windows of the upper story so as to carry the rose out and away from the heat of the walls. The rose has, of course, long since finished

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its first flowering and will not recommence till the end of September, when it will probably go on up to Christmas, if the weather is normal. Nearer the door of the house there is another Niphетос on its own roots, but this will never attain the height or strength of its grafted brother, though it blooms somewhat earlier, being more sheltered.

Here I must note another mistake, viz., having sacrificed a piece of this southwest wall to a *Jasminum nudiflorum*; this was planted in very early days and in remembrance of its value at home in winter. The old olive tree in the late tulip bed is covered with it, and is always a mass of its yellow flowers, whereas these wall plants do hardly any good, and are to be removed this autumn.

All along the façade, between the *persiani*, on both floors, are quaint bits of Italian pottery. From the upper floor, old copies of the terra-cotta heads in the frieze over the hospital at Pistoia look down upon you with most realistic expression. On the lower level are some curious old *stemme* (coats of arms), cages of turtledoves are securely attached to the wall, and their inmates keep up their plaintive croon most hours of the twenty-four; for I often hear them during the night when, no doubt, the brilliant moonlight confuses them. These signori I may observe, are each given a finger biscuit every day. Framed, so to say, by the tendrils of the white passion flower, is one of the best Della Robbia copies I have ever seen; subject, the "September" medallion, from the series in the South Kensington Museum.

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The pavement on either side of the ascent is beautifully decorated with pot plants, tall cannas, pelargoniums, yellow marguerites, etc., and finished off with a row of nierembergia in front, which has a light and graceful effect. On the left hand the low wall of the azalea bed is now pretty well covered with the small-leaved *Ficus repens*. The wet spring has done more for its growth, in the last three months, than it had gained during the previous three years. The top of this low wall has at its beginning large pots of variegated white periwinkle, long trails of which hang down to the ground, and handsome fuchsias, plants not so easily attained in this dry climate as at home. There are also various old terracotta *casetti*, or boxes containing ivy-leaved pelargoniums and tall, flowering tropaeoleums. This wall is our special corner for plants requiring half shade, and later on begonias will take the place of the fuchsias.

The wistarias, planted with a view to increasing this shade, at the back of the wooden erection over the azalea bed, have now so far advanced that the wires supporting them, and fastened to the Niphetus rose balcony, are quite covered, and for the first time there is an attempt at a small second flowering. I believe the autumn flowering of the wistarias in Constantinople is almost as abundant as that of the spring. The three posts at the back of this section are planted with *rhynchospermum* and those in front with *Saffrana* roses, which are valuable here for their late autumn flowering; among these twines

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a variegated-leaved cistus, that has little bunches of small blue berries; the whole effect is extremely good even at this season, but, of course, its great beauty is in April and May when the wistaria flowers hang down in clusters.

I regret to say these wires afford a fine promenade to a rat who has shown most refined taste in his choice of diet, first the buds of the Niphetos roses (he would not touch the Maréchal Niel), then the new flowering shoots on which our autumn supply depends, and, having finished these delicacies, the white passion flowers. Eugenio knocked this gentleman down the other day, but he scuttled off before the Persian could be brought on the scene. However, we bricked up his retreat.

At the top of the slight ascent to the upper court-yard stands a beautiful old *orcia* (oil-jar) recently presented to me by a friend, who had the good fortune to find fifty of these treasures in the roof of his villa when the ceilings were being restored.

The azalea bed itself is empty of all but the few plants actually growing there, for all those in pots, that usually stand in it, have been carried round to the north side of the house for coolness and shade. In about a fortnight's time they will be repotted and left where they are till November, when we make our last change of plants for winter.

Standing by this large red-brown *orcia*, near the hall-door, on the upper of the two long steps beneath it, are placed two magnolia pots, one on either side of the door. Tuscan garden pots are very handsome,

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beautiful in form, and some of the old ones very original in decoration. In former times it was customary for Italian families of rank to have these big lemon *conche* stamped with their coats of arms and richly decorated ; I have one very uncommon specimen, an octagonal pot with curved handles, and the Medici arms stamped on back and front. This came from the old Gamberaia villa before it passed into the hands of its present owner. We saw it there and I sought out the proprietor and asked if he would have any objection to letting me have it, for a consideration. I had taken a great deal of trouble to find this man, having gone several times to his house to try to see him. When he heard that an English lady had called so often, his Italian imagination probably led him into fine flights of fancy ; how far these had been from the truth, I saw immediately by his crest-fallen expression when the reality, an old woman in search of a flower pot, presented itself, and felt that he said to himself, "another mad forestiera." However, he was very polite, said that the pot was not of the slightest interest or value to him if I would give his gardener a trifle for his trouble in bringing it to my house. I have several of these old garden receptacles for plants, *cosetti*, *conche*, "orcie," etc., that I have unearthed, from time to time, out of old gardens and contadini court-yards, but none so curious and interesting as the Gamberaia pot.

But to return to the magnolia pots; these are very singular in shape, and as they are only used for growing young magnolias, and in very few nursery gardens,

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I doubt many English people having seen them. They stand about two feet in height, and at the top measure rather over a foot in width, but taper slightly towards the bottom. I had visions of climbing roses in these, rambling over the hall door, but after several attempts, I was obliged to give the roses up, and to confess myself beaten. With a southwest aspect the summer sun scorched them, and their poor roots were literally frizzled. After we took up the paving-stones, the roots of the roses and other creepers planted against the house had room to wander away in search of coolness and moisture, and as the entrance was on such a decided slope, plenty of rain in winter and of water from the watering of the pots in summer ran down to them, but in those pots they had no chance. Finally I planted them with *Bignonia capreolata*. This has been a great success. At present the door is wreathed with their fresh, pale green leaves, and though their flowering is not of long duration, they remain green and decorative all the winter. On the lower step, handsome cactus plants half hide the long stems of the magnolias' pots, and below that again Mr. Eugenio, who prides himself on his decorative effects almost as much as his padrona does on hers, has arranged a most skilful group: a few belated petunias, variegated green and white eunonymus, carnations, and falling over and among these, a mass of pale blue plumbago capensis, the whole finished off with a few brilliantly coloured pelargoniums. There is a quaint stone ledge or shelf just over the door, and at present it holds a row of small

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aloes, cacti, and such foliage plants as will bear grilling. On either side a beautiful old iron bracket has been fixed, from which is suspended a basket containing, at this hottest season of the year, an old-fashioned pelargonium with a pink-edged leaf. These brackets came from the Valtellina. Old iron is very rarely to be picked up in Tuscany. Immediately above the door is a copy of one of the Della Robbia bambini of the Innocenti, and at the left side, nestling among the bignonia foliage, is another blue and white terra cotta madonna and child. Over the old middle window of the drawing-room is a sweet little bambino of Desiderio da Settignano, over which the Maréchal Niel roses nod their heads.

For the present, I think that completes the tale of our decorative wall effects, mostly trees, planted, so to say, by friends who have desired to leave their mark.

All the flowers have had to be moved from the stone benches below the drawing-room windows; water is too precious to admit of their occupying so hot a position. These are now filled with large pots of tuberoses planted about a month ago, for September flowering. They look very happy there, and come on quite as fast as they would do in stove heat at home. Below, on the pavement, a row of balsams is still standing, but they will not last much longer and we shall not replace them with other pots, as the rhynchospermums planted against the low wall have to make their year's growth, and will be the better for all the air, light and sun they can get. There are also some large pots of the big-flowered white jasmine, called

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here "Catalonia," the perfume of which is even more delicious than that of lemon-blossom. One finds quantities of this plant grown in Egypt, and I do not know if the name "Catalonia" may not be a reminiscence of a Hispano-Arabic origin.

To the left of the stanzone door are grouped all our gardenias, now in full flower. For some years I tried placing them under the partial shade of the cherry-tree, but the result was not satisfactory; full sun suits them much better. Among them are several of a very small, star-shaped blossom called here Mugherini, that came originally, I believe, from Goa. They belong to the Gardenia family, unlike the ordinary ones are very difficult to graft, slow growing, and apt to die off; consequently they are expensive plants. The best nursery grower of these once told me that a plant, for which he was asking what seemed to me rather an extravagant price, was grafted on a stock that was eight years old before being fit to be so employed.

On the right of the stanzone door is a group of orange trees, kept there just below the windows of my summer bedroom for the sake of their perfume. One of our succession of good and capable Scotch maids was much surprised at finding that oranges were the natural and legitimate outcome of orange-blossoms, and confessed that she had always thought the orange-blossom was grown for bride's bouquets; the development of fruit had never occurred to her.

In the angle under this window, in the bed made after the removal of the old stanzone doors, are planted what I consider two of my greatest successes,

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viz., a plant of "Azorre" and one of *Tecoma jasminoides*. The former outgrew its pot, and I determined to venture it in this sheltered corner, though told I might as well throw the plant away. The result is splendid. It has grown as honeysuckle does in Devonshire or Cornwall, and has now, after covering the front wall of the stanzone, flung itself up to the second story window, wreathing it on either side and threatening to walk in. The Maréchal Niel rose that now occupies the entire wall space above the three drawing-room windows, has indeed arrived at the top of the house. Unlike the more delicate *Niphетос*, the Maréchal does not mind the scorching heat of the southwest wall, and its roots have evidently found something beneath the paving-stones that exactly suits them.

I cannot recall having seen this "Azorre" at home, either at Kew or elsewhere. It belongs to the Jasmine tribe, and is very common here, but generally planted in huge pots or tubs, and kept indoors. I have no idea if "Azorre" is its proper name or only a local one. It has a small, white, jasmine-like blossom, with a delicious scent, and handsome stiff foliage of a dark glossy green, and lasts a long time in water. I am sorry to see it flowering so early this year; though it lasts some months in flower it will hardly survive till November as I have known it do in less forward seasons.

The *Tecoma* is a most lovely thing of the same habit of growth as the Azorre, but still more delicate, its flowers growing in clusters, and suggesting a min-

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iature gloxinia, white with a purple blotch in the throat: the only drawback is that it is quite scentless. I had great misgivings as to this plant standing the winter, even though it was a well-established one, but it has done well and has just finished flowering. I have only seen it here grown under glass.

On the side of the court-yard that runs round from the stanzone, opposite the drawing-room windows, stand our few lemon trees, in big pots that are thickly planted with tradescantia, which hangs down in picturesque abundance. Between the lemons, tower tall cannas with bronzed foliage and gladiolus-like flowers. Their pots should have been gay with portulaccas, but, alas! some insect enemy has destroyed them, I cannot quite discover *what*, from Eugenio's description, but incline to the belief that it is a red spider. Various plants are grouped in front of each large pot, and in the centre of the court-yard an enormous *conche*, containing *rhynchospermum*, is surrounded by gay-flowering cannas passing from pale yellow to dark oranges and reds, and other foliage plants: everywhere the *motif* is that of the pale blue plumbago. A Tuscan gardener rarely fails in successful groupings of this kind. In front of the stanzone door is a semicircular flower-stand filled with ivy-leaved pelargoniums, now in the height of their flowering. These will go on till November, and then make way for the chrysanthemums.

Crossing the court-yard, and passing through the old stone posts that flank the low wall on either side,

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and which are now wreathed with white and yellow jasmine, we stand looking out on the garden proper. On the right, the early tulip-bed is now covered with ivy-leaved pelargoniums of different tints, from pale pink to deep rose ; these are pegged down and furnish flowers for the dinner table when there is hardly anything else suitable for that purpose. At the back of this bed the hedge of sweet-scented lemon-plants is in great beauty, leaved down to the ground, and screening the somewhat leggy growth of Fortune's Yellow and white Lamarque, which now completely cover the *espalier* (fence) erected for them, from the top of which they begin to push upwards across wires into the court-yard. The variegated periwinkles that edge this bed and hang over its stone edging in so picturesque a fashion, have been more punished by the drought than anything else in the garden.

The five rose beds below, naturally, have not much to boast of at this season, and though we can occasionally gather a few, all flower decoration indoors is given up after June, except the few glasses on the dinner table. Cut flowers at this season wither in a day, so it is not worth the time and trouble to arrange them, to say nothing of the precious water they use. In the first of these beds are planted, between the roses, some eighty of Lemoine's fine gladioli, which last year made a splendid show in June, and of which we have somewhat deferred the planting this year, wishing to have them later in flower. A gardening friend tells me we are fortunate in being able to have them in the ground ; his garden is so infested with

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*zuccaiole*, a kind of mole-cricket, that he can only grow them in pots.

On the left is a bed of spring-flowering shrubs, with the magnolias at the back, and irises forming a groundwork throughout; it is wonderfully little burnt up. Behind it, in the shady corner behind the old acacia tree, is a beautiful group of palms and ferns and all the foliage plants used for house decoration in winter, as well as my little stock of *Cypripedium insigne*. Every tree-trunk in this corner is wreathed with honeysuckle and roses, and from that of the big acacia a really fine *platycerium* is suspended. A group of bamboos fills up the vacant space opening on the avenue, and there are comfortable chairs in this corner, where one can sit and read in the early morning; but after eleven A. M. the garden is forsaken till five or six P. M., and even then it is hot and we prefer to adjourn to the big park, which in the evening lies in shade.

Looking down the grass walk, the shrubs on the left, that now form a harmonious contrast to the shrubbery belt behind them, composed of cypress trees, sweet bay, and pale green acacias, have as yet suffered little from the drought. I cannot imagine how the plants stand it, for in the last four weeks rain has fallen only twice, and that for a very short time. For days past the thunder has been rolling about, and as we hear of good rainfalls at various points not far distant (also, alas! of much injury done by hail), we hope our turn may come, and that the cisterns may fill up.

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The oleander hedge to the right is in great beauty, and it sounds ungrateful to say of it that I look upon it as another of my mistakes, or, rather, as matter in the wrong place. Oleanders look best as standards isolated on grass, or growing in the angles of old walls, where they can hang over and be well seen from below. Also, they are generally so late in making their new foliage, that the old, spotted, unsightly winter leaves, falling about, make them most untidy plants in a small garden. In our hedge of these there are thirty fine plants of all shades, from white and pale pink singles, to the deep rose of the doubles; but the most beautiful of all are a pale lemon colour: these last are not such strong growers as the others. We cannot let these plants grow much higher than they are at present, as they would interfere with the pillar-roses planted behind them at the edge of the grass.

On the grass itself the two old fig-trees afford a splendid shade to the centre oval bed, now filled with cannas and cactus dahlias. The bed beyond is already planted with young plants of *Salvia splendens*, that is so gay in the autumn. Our largest bed is empty of all but some *ricinus* in the centre, as Eugenio is wisely keeping the foliage plants intended to fill it in pots on the cool north side of the house, till some rain has fallen.

We cannot spare water for the plants in the ground, though when the peonies and the Japanese anemones show signs of much distress they get an occasional drop. Shrubs are the most forgiving things I know.

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One summer that I spent here, all the shrubs turned as black as if there had been a frost. I never expected to see them revive; it was heartrending, but what could I do? We were paying heavily for hand-carried water just to keep the pot-plants alive. But the following spring, to my joy and surprise, they all flowered as usual, and since then I have learnt to possess my soul in patience.

The part of the garden that gives me the greatest pleasure just now is the aforesaid northwest side lying below the windows of my summer sitting-room. This is not because of its intrinsic beauty, though the view from it is incomparable, but because it shows real effort on Eugenio's part, not only at decency and order in the present, but in making provision for the future. Spring seedlings neatly pricked out in wooden boxes, freezias and primulas standing tidily under a small rose pergola, and all the newly planted carnations, about sixty pots, on top of the wooden staging we placed here for them two years ago, on iron stanchions driven into the wall. One day last year, during my absence, some boys mounted this wall when the gardener was at dinner, and tore up every carnation: four go to each pot! The result was not only their total loss for this year, but that, having no plants from which to take cuttings, I was obliged to buy a fresh stock of them this year. To insure ourselves against a repetition of this sort of thing, we have had iron uprights fixed in the wall with two rows of barbed wire across them. The amelopsis planted, years ago, against this wall, has grown up and round

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them, but whoever grasps them will meet his reward. Below the carnations stand between two and three hundred pots of chrysanthemums waiting their final shift into their flowering pots.

Right at the back of the house our Parma violets, taken up from their winter quarters, are divided out in a sun-shaded bed ; and on the verge of the long field that slopes down from the big villa to our back premises all our azaleas and rhododendrons are neatly arranged, each on its own arch of protecting bricks. It may sound odd to English folk that I should mention such matter-of-course things as these, but those who know the ordinary Italian garden will understand the "line upon line, precept upon precept" business it has been to drum into a young, untrained Tuscan an idea of order such as has been arrived at here. I confess that when I remember the hopeless-looking piece of waste land that fell to my share when we settled, and look at the garden of to-day, I must own to an immense satisfaction ; for considering the horrible soil, the scanty water supply, the absence of the most ordinary conveniences for working, the wretched accommodation for housing plants in the winter, and the very untrained help that I have been able to afford, it is, as the people about here say, *miracolo* that the place is what it is to-day, a little garden of which no one need be ashamed, and one that is never without flowers at any season, and into every corner of which you may poke without finding any glaring evidence of mismanagement.

I have heard of it sometimes from total strangers

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in England, in various terms of appreciation, but the description that has best pleased me was one I chanced to overhear, when it was spoken of as "the garden that gives pleasure to so many."

Alas! pride has had a fall! The ink on the last page was not dry when, about two-thirty P. M., on the twenty-first, a dust storm worthy of Egypt swept past us; the thunder, which had been rolling about for several days, gathered up and pealed just over our heads, while great waves of grey clouds hurried up. Eugenio flew to get in the birds, huddle his begonias into shelter, and make secure what he could; none too soon, for in ten minutes the rain came down in torrents, and along with it hailstones the size of pigeons' eggs. The storm lasted only about two hours, but at the end of that time the little garden that had looked so fair lay a battered wreck.

When I went out the next morning at seven-thirty A.M., I found Eugenio doing his best to *rime-diare*, but he said it would be a month's work to clean and sort up. The poor cannas have their leaves stripped off by the hail, and the young chrysanthemums are much damaged. But even so, the damage is small when compared with the benefit of having our cisterns (which were almost empty) about half filled, to say nothing of the good soaking the ground has got.

The thunder is still rolling round, and it will not be surprising if rain falls again, as the clouds still look very threatening. The heat is most oppressive, though nothing to what we hear that it is in Paris.

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Eugenio gave up the greater part of his Sunday holiday towards straightening things. In the evening one of the processions so common throughout Tuscany passed close under our garden wall, and friends in various walks of life, their servants and our own, came to view it. These church processions are a great feature in Tuscany, and most of the little country churches arrange so as to have them in rotation. There is to be one in Florence, from the Church of the Carmine, that has not been celebrated for nearly forty years; it is expected to be a very grand affair indeed, with bands of music belonging to different outlying districts. These local processions are a very interesting feature in the country districts of Italy: they give the people a chance of meeting their friends, and something to look forward to for weeks beforehand, and to converse about afterwards.

It is now a week since the storm, and not another drop of rain has fallen. The heat has been terrific. I don't know how the servants do their work, and Eugenio has had the very heavy job of re-potting all the camelias, azaleas and rhododendrons — about a hundred *conche* and pots in all.

There ought to be a splendid flowering from these next spring. Azaleas have a nasty trick of slipping their flowering every now and then, and this year it has been very partial indeed.

I see in *The Garden*, of the twenty-first instant, a letter referring to the dyed pink lilies the writer had seen in the flower-market here, and an enquiry if they are really only *Lilium candidum* dyed, or some quite

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new species! I remember being taken in myself, the first time I saw these, and on appealing to one of my nurserymen friends, he was highly amused at the idea of *my* not having known better, and the flower sellers were much pleased at getting such a rise out of the Signora Inglese.

To-day has come the horrifying news of the king's assassination. Another victim of the Anarchists!

*August.* It will be three weeks to-morrow since rain fell, with the exception of one very partial shower, on that occasion it looked as if a big storm were coming, and rain fell in torrents only a mile from here. This district is a veritable Cave of Æolus, clouds gather up only to be dispersed by the wind. All the gardens in our neighbourhood are in the same case, and the contadini require rain to swell the grapes. The Muscatels (*uva salamana!*) have begun, and very excellent they are.

The chief weather phenomenon in these last three weeks has been that a strong *libeccio* wind has blown incessantly, a thing I never remember before in August. We hear that at Leghorn the sea is breaking over the roofs of the houses.

I am met this evening with the pleasing intelligence that there is only water for to-day's use in the cisterns, and as the hour of the change of the moon has already passed, my last hope has vanished, and I have directed the gardener to arrange for water to be brought in barrels, a most costly and troublesome proceeding. The new moon is not till the twenty-fifth, so there is *poco speranza* till that date. I know it is considered

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quite unscientific to connect the moon with changes of weather, but, however that may be, there is no getting over the fact that in this country there is generally a change of some kind coinciding with every change of moon.

The pot plants in the court-yard are still fresh and beautiful, but the garden itself is a desert. The work has been heavy in these last few weeks,—all the chrysanthemums transferred to their flowering pots, the gardenias also repotted, with a plentiful allowance of beautiful *castagna*, geraniums, pelargoniums and coleus having also had a shift to ensure good autumn flowering. Then the callas have had to be re-started to secure early spring flowering ; of course if we had any forcing house they could easily be made to flower before Christmas, but we have to wait for their blossoms till March or April, when about thirty large pots of them stand below the dining-room windows in the court-yard, a lovely sight. This year the wet spring has so prolonged their flowering, that their repose has been but short.

Now the daffodils, that are going to flit from the oleander bed to the upper half of the grassplot, have all to be dug up. We hear of a fresh "heat-wave" having travelled from New York to England, and are praying its effects may not make themselves felt here.

In the last three weeks nothing, of course, has been thought of or spoken about except the great tragedy enacted at Monza. It is said that a great "wave of patriotism" has swept over Italy. That may be, and

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it is certainly wonderful to think of the cry of "Viva Savoia" in Rome, where I can remember the time when the deadliest insult that could be offered to a man was to hiss out "Piemontese." But the Italian papers have been full of the most nauseous, sickly sentimentality. *Tanto buono, tanto caritatevole*, etc., etc.

Good and charitable the poor king undoubtedly was, but if he had been less conciliatory it would have been better for the country to-day. There has been muddling all through. The police were well warned, and characters like Bresci should never have been allowed access to the Monza Park at all. Queen Margherita has been wonderful in the way in which she has been able to set herself and her own grief aside, and everything that one hears of the young king is to his credit.

If it be true that when a document was presented to him for signature beginning "It is my *wish*," he erased the word, and substituted "It is my *will*," the right note has been struck. That is what this country requires, a firm hand, and some idea of law and order instead of shilly-shallying with polite phrases.

There seems to be a keen feeling of the disgrace that it is to the nation that so good a friend to his people as Umberto should have been murdered by an Italian and a Tuscan. But I was in the Duomo of Florence when the funeral mass was performed for the repose of his soul, and I am bound to say there appeared to be little sense of reverence, or of the sad solemnity of the occasion, on the part of the masses. Here and there, on the faces of the older men among

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the upper classes, an expression of sadness and of reflection was to be traced ; but few, even among those who had tickets for the reserved seats, had troubled to dress themselves in black, and to the lower orders it was only a matter of *spectacolo*. One terrible woman just behind me was loud in her abuse of those who occupied seats : " See the pride," she said, " of those who have seats ! Yet in a few years they and we will be beneath the ground, with the same three feet of earth above us, and we and they will all be equal then." An old gentleman sitting beside me turned and looked at her with ineffable disgust, and then at me with a slight shrug of his shoulders. I could not resist saying to him, " What beautiful sentiments are these, Signore ; these are the principles that killed your king."

When the service was finished I had occasion to call on an Italian friend, who questioned me as to the proceedings, and, in particular, as to the demeanor of the people. My reply was that their behaviour was on a par with that of the English tourists in the Parthenon at Rome, who attend the funeral service in memory of Victor Emmanuel ; arrayed in the most brilliant colours and the largest of hats and feathers, they stand on benches, and use their opera glasses.

" Well," he said, " you can't go beyond that, can you ? "

" No," I said, " that is true."

If such miscreants as Lucchini and Bresci were flogged twice a month, anarchism would soon go out of fashion, but so long as murderers are simply im-

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prisoned, without any physical suffering, the game will go on, and it may soon be difficult to get royalties to take the risks to which in these days the best of them are exposed.

Beneath all the serene politeness in this country, the people are republican to the backbone ; "I am as good as you !" is the keynote. Looking back on old times, when every man's hand was against his neighbour, the wonder is, not that there is so little real fusion, but that there should ever have been welded any national life at all. The end will probably be a kind of federation of small states, on the model of the Swiss Republic; already in the north, the rich, industrial, prosperous, civilized north, you constantly hear the complaint that they are paying in taxation double what is demanded from the south. I do not say, for I do not know, if this is true or not, but the discontent on this ground is widespread.

*August 19.* Rain has again fallen within a mile of us, but never a drop here, and to-day a furious tramontana wind is blowing, bringing clouds of dust about us, and withering up the garden even more than the hot sun. The gardener has gone on an annual excursion, so there can be no watering till to-morrow morning, and then it will have to be done with water brought in barrels.

Some one has sent me the *Truth* of the ninth instant, and I am curious to know who has written the article on "Royal Lives and Deaths." The part relating to the Italian royal family is most accurate, but so much matter of history, that there are few now alive

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who could have been so much behind the scenes in the sixties.

To-day I have a letter from an embassy in a distant part of the world, in which the writer says :

" Tuesday, the thirty-first of July, we received the news of Umberto's assassination. It is appalling! I hear that M—— (the Italian ambassador) is quite overwhelmed. I could not get up to see him till this evening, when I left here at six and rode up to — to find that, an hour before, he had left for town, to receive there the official condolences. He met the Prince of Naples in Constantinople a few weeks ago, and says he is very keen about everything, particularly about the future of Italian settlements on the Red Sea. This sounds like 'foreign expansion,' and one would like to hear of internal concentration in Italy for a generation or two. I fear there is trouble ahead there."

That is so, as Americans say ; internal reforms in the administration, and an honest determination on the part of the moneyed classes to take their fair share of public burdens, are what we now require. There is no law in Italy that cannot be evaded. Votes are bought and sold at five francs each, and there is no standard of public opinion to prevent this. If the "upper classes" paid their taxes honestly, there would be no necessity for the cruel burdens that press so heavily on the peasantry, every necessary of life being taxed beyond belief. The patience of Southern peoples is amazing ; in England things that pass here as matters to be expected would not be borne for a month.

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However this young king may develop, he has had the best of early training at the hands of an English governess. On one occasion he wished to alter the route that his mother had commanded for his afternoon drive. The governess, of course, stuck to her guns and carried out her orders; the "Principino," as he was affectionately called in those days, howled all the way out and home. Next morning a tap was heard at the schoolroom door, and the burly form of Victor Emmanuel presented itself: "I have come," said he, "to thank you for teaching our little boy a lesson of obedience yesterday." The child looked up: "But I, when I am king, will cut off her head." Mrs. L—— has not lived to meet this threatened execution, but the story, for which I can vouch, shows how highly discipline was appreciated in his upbringing.<sup>1</sup>

*August 21.* Last night we were informed that the house cistern was likewise empty. I sent a note up to the villa early this morning, stating our plight, and suggesting that, as has been done on previous occasions, it would save my man's time and labour if he took

<sup>1</sup> I have been much surprised in reading Bolton King's excellent paper on the present position of Italy, in the *Contemporary* for November, 1900, to find that a statement had been made to him, that the youth of the young king had been passed "under a pitiless discipline." "Youth" is a relative term, and under what kind of régime he may have been, from the age of ten or thereabouts, I do not know. But of the nature of the training he received as a child, when under the care of the English lady to whose management he was entrusted by his parents and grandfather, there can be no doubt. He was taught to obey, a priceless lesson, very rare in this country, and it is much to be desired that every one of his subjects might enjoy the same advantage.

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up a couple of barrels to be filled, instead of the ordinary picturesque copper pitchers. While I am having my morning tea and toast in the garden the head villa gardener presents himself with the reply ; and I know by the evil expression of triumph on the man's face that he has been asked as to the state of the huge cisterns there, and has put what obstacles he could in the way of our getting what we require ; and I further know that this is his payment for my having complained to the secretary of the way in which his wife's cocks and hens intrude on our grass walk. I thank him, and defer opening the note till I have finished my meal in peace. Presently the cook returns from market, and not knowing that it is politely regretted that there is too little water left up above to allow of increasing our supplies, trots off with his pails, and returns to report that if he had been a bit of bread he would have been devoured on the spot. Tuscans have a forcible way of going straight to the point in expressing themselves.

I sigh, and prepare to abandon the nearest approach to my birthday dress, which I always wear of a morning (and I had taken down "Elizabeth" from the shelf where she dwells in much good company and was going to have a happy time looking over her amusing pages). I dress and proceed to face the enemy, and, after a course of what the Junior Partner of this firm irreverently terms "Half Hours with the Best Authors," I return, peaceful and placid, having settled my water supply *pro temp.* I give the cook a few gentle hints as to the virtue of non-obtrusiveness and return

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to "Elizabeth." I wonder what her "white China roses" are ; I never saw white "Bengalese," as these are called here. I envy her in nothing, not the seeds by the pound or the tea roses by the hundred, and unlimited labour, so much as in the wonderful constitution that enabled her, after three successive babies in as many years, still to have energy for any pursuit whatever. She certainly owes her ancestry a great many candles, and would appear to be passing on the same blessing to her own offspring. Years ago I found myself once in the same hotel at S. Moritz with some of Elizabeth's German "in-laws," as I believe the queen always terms these relations ; and I can imagine that German manners and customs must have been a trial to the English bride ; however, her predecessor must have cleared the way somewhat, and I should say the "Man of Wrath" was the most good-tempered of his species.

A friend said to me last year, in speaking of a great Greek scholar, who remains a philosopher, we will say, even after marrying a charming wife, "Ah, my dear, you should have seen him before the roads were made."

Elizabeth's digestion must be superhuman ; few of us could live on salad teas for weeks together. The word digestion always makes me think of Herbert Spencer (an odd association), and I have no doubt that his, poor man, leaves much to be desired. He formed for some time one of our little party at table one winter at Cairo ; there were also two young women, daughters I believe of an old flame of his

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in bygone years, and I heard him one day vigorously assuring them, at the end of some long argument, that they might rest assured they never would have the digestion of their mother ! Now I have often heard girls told they never would be as good-looking or as amiable as their mothers, but never before heard their inferiority in the matter of digestion made a reproach to them, and it rather amused me. One day, he took up a book I was reading and began lamenting that people read so much and thought so little ; it was not exactly polite, but I cordially agreed with him. This is the blank day for the English papers, and we have to possess our souls in patience as to what is happening at Pekin.

A young German friend of ours was visiting some relations in England, and, being anxious to improve his knowledge of colloquial phrases, was always on the alert to add to his little stock ; hearing one cousin say to another, "Now you've put your foot in it," he proceeded to enquire, " Into what hef you put your foot?" Explanations followed. Next day he was told to take care, or he would "get into hot water" with some one. Further explanations ; and a few days later he was heard saying triumphantly, " Now I hef put both my feet in hot water ! "

That is what appears to be the end and aim of the Vatican clique at present, and we wait with some curiosity to see what will be said in England of their latest utterances in the "Osservatore Romano" as to the poor murdered king.

The relief of the Pekin Legations is at last be-

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yond a doubt, thank God! What they and their relations in England must have suffered in these last two months it is hard to imagine: one day's rations left, death in view hourly,—and such a death!

We have had a little rain these last few days, and it is wonderful how the poor plants and shrubs pick up; the September moon began this morning and we may legitimately count on autumn rains during that month, only it is quite possible September may be hotter than usual, August having been cooler. A friend kindly allowed his experienced gardener to come here this morning and give us a lot of good advice, a kind of doctor's consultation business. He highly approves of all my little projects for autumn, and assures me that if we carry out the necessary pruning, there will be wood enough to keep a baker's oven going all the winter! It was impossible for me to have foreseen the growth that would accrue in fourteen years of this climate, and pruning is what is now chiefly wanted, if the whole place is not to relapse into the wilderness condition of the rest of the property.

We had a great excitement two nights ago: my Scotch maid appeared in my room almost speechless from fright; a large rat had walked into her room from the garden! Hearing that both the door and window were shut I sent to the Junior Partner's room to request the attendance of the Persian, who had just finished his final repast before encountering the fatigues of the night; this repast generally consists of a saucer of pigeon's bones. He came down looking greatly surprised, and was introduced on the scene,

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sat and looked on, much interested, let the rat run about his legs, but made no effort to detain him there; and after two hours' fruitless endeavours I was obliged to have the poor gardener aroused from his slumbers, when he quickly despatched the intruder. It is only fair to the Persian to say that he has not a tooth left in his poor old mouth, and that, in the days of his youth, he was very keen on rats. A young blackbird fell out of its nest the other day, and landed close to where Jack was having his daily toilet made for him ; he sniffed at it, looked greatly surprised, but made not the faintest attempt to touch the little creature which Eugenio replaced safely in its nest.

Within the last few days all the daffodils that have hitherto filled the spaces between the oleanders have been taken up, and I intend to plant them on the upper half of the grass; we tried this two years ago, as an experiment, on the lower half, and the result has been so satisfactory that I have no hesitation in bestowing the rest of our stock in this way. Daffodils look incomparably better on grass than grown in any other way, and there will be the further advantage that we will now have room for another iris border. The next work will be taking up, dividing and re-planting the existing collection of irises, and planting the new ones already ordered for this border. The large, pale blue Florence iris, grown here in fields for the sake of its roots, from which the orris powder of commerce is made, is a lovely flower; so is the Florentine white iris, and the dark purple. Besides these, I have a very large collection of the smoky bronze German iris, Spanish,

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in all colours, and the dwarf pumilas, etc., which flower in very early spring. Of these, the Algerian pale blue Stylosa is the handsomest ; it grows here like a weed. The Susiana does well in sunny sheltered borders, but never flowers abundantly with us, and is liable to damp off; but I got a fair picking of flowers from those we have, only they are not gathered in basketfuls !

Then the seeds,—pansies, petunias, myosotis, niterina, linarias, and all the other treasures that are to make our spring show,—have arrived, and must be sown at once now that some rain has cooled the air. There never seems to come an idle moment in a garden here.

On the twenty-seventh, the Italian papers were full of sad accounts of damage done to crops in the north of Italy by floods and inundations, and we began to feel as if the clerk of the weather had forgotten us; not so, before mid-day clouds began to gather up and the thunder to crash, then a furious northwind got up, and seemed to blow our storm away. But it returned, and we had splendid rain all the rest of the day. Yesterday morning it was wonderful to see how the poor parched plants had revived, and even the grass walk had recovered tone. In the evening the gardener bestowed a plentiful sprinkling of wood ash over all the grass. I am very particular about this being done before rain, or even while there is only moisture about; nothing manures grass so effectually as wood ash, and ours, from the winter fires, is always stacked in the cellars under the stanzone for this purpose. Later on, when

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the real autumn rains begin, we will mix the ash with a little fine sifted earth and some grass-seed before sprinkling it. Yesterday morning Eugenio announced with a cheerful countenance that there was now sufficient water in the cisterns to carry us through the remainder of the summer, even should it not rain again in September, a contingency highly improbable. Yesterday was one of the most beautiful days that I have ever seen here, and we were able to drive out at two o'clock, instead of having to sit in dark rooms indoors. To-day the rain has returned, and the thermometer is down to seventy-four degrees, so that one is quite glad to have his clothes on, instead of deferring the evil moment of dressing till as near the hour of *déjeuner* as decency will permit. I never remember so low a temperature in August as that of the last few days, caused no doubt by the storms and rains that have prevailed everywhere.

The Val Sesia has suffered, and the beautiful road between Varallo and Fobello is quite destroyed, and the bridges greatly damaged. We were up in that lovely region two years ago. Even now few English travellers are to be found there, and when I first knew the district, thirty years ago, there were none. The costume worn at Fobello is lovely, with a great deal of beautiful embroidery about it. The women spend the winter months getting these things ready for the tourist season. When we were last at Varallo one of the best embroideresses from Fobello had been down staying in our hotel for some time, giving lessons to some ladies who wished to be able to do the embroi-

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ery. I had an apron and shirt made for the Junior Partner, who was then in France, and we purchased the materials for the skirt, which my maid made exactly after the model of a doll she bought; the shoes I ordered at Varallo, and was fortunate enough to pick up some quaint old gold ear-rings and pins that made the costume very complete; so altogether it made a charming Christmas present.

*September.* We have been away from home on a little *giro* in the Lucchese mountains, making Barga our headquarters. We have long wished to see Barga, and as the Junior Partner, who is a qualified guide to most of the by-ways of Tuscany, wanted to add it to her repertoire, we thought this would be a favourable opportunity to go and explore its beauties.

Unfortunately, we arrived "en route" at Lucca on the first night of the representation of "La Tosca." The composer is a Lucchese, and now that the railway is open between Via Reggio and Lucca it is easy for all the sea-bathers at the former town to come, and as the bath patients at Montecatini, on the other side, can do the same, Lucca in the month of September is quite a little centre of Italian beauty and fashion.

We had our tempers much tried by an unjustifiable demand from the *dazio* official at the entrance of the town, who insisted on overhauling our travelling-bags (the luggage had been left at the station), and claimed tax on a small travelling flask of white wine and some remains of cake, put hastily into a *sporta* as we were leaving home. We were so angry at this piece of extortion, that we poured the wine out on the ground

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and handed the cake to a *povero* on the other side! The official informed us that he only did his duty, but I knew that had we paid the coppers he demanded from us they would never have gone farther than his own pocket. Only once before, in all our travels, have I had a similar experience, and then I appealed to the *capo*, who at once rectified the imposition. I reported the Lucchese official to Rome and hope he will be admonished.

This *dazio* (the town toll) presses very heavily on the contadini who bring in their produce to market, and is a fruitful source of cheating on the one side and oppression on the other. Once, at Pisa, when I had a few hours to spare between trains, I walked down to the town from the station with my maid. Having nothing in our hands, we of course passed through at once; just before us was a contadina, who had been interrogated, and had assured the official that she too was innocent of stock, alive or dead; but once past, she was imprudent enough to raise her skirt. My maid pressed my arm: "Oh, look, look ma'am, look at the hen sitting in her pocket!" and sure enough in her under petticoat was a pocket in which a hen was comfortably ensconced; it was craning its neck and having a good look about it: of course the *dazio* official flew after her, but I did not wait to see the result of the fray.

After this tussle, we entered Lucca the *industriosa* feeling rather frayed, and our dismay was great when we found there was hardly a bed to be had in the town. After trying at several of the hotels to secure

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accommodation, we appealed to our driver, a Barga man, as to what we had better do, and he took us to a very humble and unpretending inn, of which, well as I know Lucca, I had never heard, but in which we found quite possible rooms, clean beds, and great good will, with most reasonable prices. We went off to a restaurant to dine, but were much too tired to undertake the "Tosca," and even next morning I did not feel inclined to venture on any prowl round, having in mind the journey by rail, and then, by road, the long pull up to Barga.

The drive is beautiful, and the place itself fully came up to what I had heard of its picturesque and lovely situation. The Junior Partner had had a preliminary canter a few weeks before, with a view to quarters; and though we heard that an inn higher up was perhaps more civilized than the one as you first enter the place, which is where all the *vetturini* stop, we decided in favour of the latter, as the owners of it were said to be much pleasanter to deal with. This inn, the "Posta," stands in an enchanting situation : every room in the house, which is a big, old, rambling place, has windows looking both ways, and, whichever way you look out, the views are lovely and the air fresh and pure. Barga is only about thirteen hundred feet above sea level, but the quality of the air is quite fresh enough for warmth-loving people like ourselves, and we receive letters from friends in the high Alps of Switzerland speaking of the champagne air of the glaciers, and the delights of cutting your own paths in the ice, and bless Providence that we

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are in the south. The green of the chestnut trees that clothe the lower slopes may be a trifle trying to eyes that love the olives, but the peaks beyond are so beautiful that one can forgive that; there is a light, fresh breeze playing round all day, and, as the moon is almost full, the nights are lovely beyond words. Of course the arrangements are primitive, rooms and beds quite good, and we have a nice little sitting-room for our books and writing. The hotel proprietor cooks, and has an unfortunate habit of applying cloves and cinnamon, etc., etc., to his roasts and cutlets, almost rivalling the kind of flavour of an apothecary's shop that a Chinese cook always imparts to his dishes, but we get along somehow. The soup is excellent, so is the wine, which comes from a distance, so are the rolls, when pulled out of the baker's oven two hours before they arrive at the brick stage which must make the fortune of the local dentist; fruit comes up from Lucca and leaves much to be desired, and the mountain trout are not abundant this year, owing to the want of rain to fill the streams in the Pistoian hills. The padrona is a fat, good-natured woman who bustles about all day; she has a squad of small children, who are tumbling about all over the floor. "Mariuccia," one of these, aged twelve, waits on us; the washing of plates, dishes and knives is of the most perfunctory description, and we are making it our business to instil some ideas of civilization into her.

This young person has a great deal of character, and would, if properly trained, make an excellent ser-

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vant ; she repeated, for the benefit of our maid, the names of all the towns in Scotland, showed her with great pride her small collection of trinkets and her first communion dress, which she said had cost a franc a metre more than that of any other girl in Barga (there is a great deal of human nature in most people), and was so struck with the maid's nice English aprons, that she announced her intention of getting her mother to make some of the same pattern for her (Mariuccia's) own use.

The old town of Barga winds up and up through narrow streets and lanes, till it terminates in the Duomo at the top. There are several terra-cottas of the Robbia family in a Franciscan convent and elsewhere, but the great show of the place is the thirteenth century pulpit in the Duomo, one of the most curious and interesting I have ever come across in Italy, and the charm of it is heightened by our not having heard any special mention of it.

Before entering the old gateway leading to the town, and lying below and alongside its walls, there is a kind of bowling-alley bordered by fine plane-trees ; at the upper end of this is a sort of raised platform of grass, in the centre of which stands a beautiful cedar of Lebanon ; this platform is reached by two flights of steps cut in the sod, and there is a tradition that Charlemagne delivered his edicts from its summit. To-day it is the haunt of all the beauty and fashion, who turn out about five o'clock to take the air and gossip with their friends.

I do not know what first led to the emigration of



PULPIT IN BARGA CATHEDRAL



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so many of the Barga people to South America and Brazil, but they all go, sometimes returning to end their days in their native village, but more frequently remaining. Yesterday, in the course of a walk, we met three people in succession who had members of their families over in Glasgow, of all places in the world, as ice-cream makers. The result of this continual stream of emigration is that nearly every one in Barga speaks English, and in response to your "Buona sera" as you are walking along the roads, the hat will be pulled off with "Good evening." It has quite an odd effect, and one I have never found in any other part of Italy. The roads are excellent, and a diligence brings the post up twice a day from the Bagni di Lucca.

On the ninth we had a tremendous thunderstorm, and the rain continued, off and on, for several days, just enough to make the weather perfect; and once the break comes in this month, one knows that there will be no more great heat. But all along the Pisan coast the weather has been awful,—thunderbolts at Spezia and Pontedera, and at the latter place the crops have been laid in ruins by the hail, and in Pisa itself chimneys blown down.

A carriage with a fine pair of horses and a small trap drove up one day; from these descended a Russian lady, her maid or companion, doctor, *maestro di casa*, footman, cook and coachman,—six people to attend to this one individual; and I believe in her villa, in another part of Tuscany, she keeps nineteen servants. The party had driven down from the Abe-

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tone, where she has a country house, and put up here for two nights, during which time Mariuccia's spoons and forks received an amount of attention that must have surprised them, and by which we greatly profited. They were pleasant, courteous people, and I believe she is very charitable, and always leaves large donations to the hospitals and the poor during these excursions.

The people of Barga do not give one at all the idea of poverty; it is a thriving industrial region. Beautiful homespun linen can be bought here, and excellent cloths and rough tweeds for men's suits. But in some of the little mountain districts in Italy, one thinks how terrible the distress must be in winter and how dreadful it must be for the parish priests to see so much misery, and have no funds to apply to its relief. I remember feeling this very strongly in a little village in the mountain region midway between Florence and Bologna, renowned as the place where the Grand Duke ate his last dinner on Tuscan soil when he fled in 1859. The scenery there might be that of the higher Perthshire Highlands, but the poverty of the people, even in the height of summer, struck me very painfully, and still more so at Gogna, on the Italian-Austrian frontier, close to Auronzo. The old people there looked perfect skeletons, gaunt and haggard, but they never begged; the younger generation did so and without shame.

The Junior Partner rejoiced Mariuccia's heart by taking her out one day on a long expedition, in the course of which, coming to a spring credited with all

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sorts of virtues, she was presented with a small cake of soap, and told that if ever her hands and nails were fit to be seen, it would be the greatest miracle the Madonna had yet performed.

On the fifteenth we chartered a little trap, and drove through the most beautiful chestnut woods, green meadows and box hedges, neatly clipped, to Castel Nuova, the capital of this district; and on, about seven miles beyond it, to Castiglione di Garfagnana, a most picturesque old town with the remains of its ancient walls and towers. The views from this last place were enchanting: little hamlets were dotted about the hillsides, in situations apparently so inaccessible that one wondered how communication between them and the outer world was carried on, and how the triple chain of birth, marriage and death was woven within their narrow limits. Here and there a sapling cypress tree stood out against the sky-line exactly as they do in the early pictures of Perugino and Raphael.

I thought what a happy month the Absentee would have spent here with his brushes. We found a family of kittens whose mother had thrown them on the parish, but the old woman, in whose house they were, professed great affection for them, and I ordered a good supper for them that evening. If ever I get into *Paradiso*, it will be through all the stray dogs for whom I have provided dinners, and cats and kittens who have been rescued from various cruel fates.

Our old coachman did not use his whip once in over thirty miles drive, and his horse went as if it en-

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joyed it. There had been a very bad landslip on that road (the old road to Modena), and a large gang of workmen were employed in repairing and embanking it. The old *cocher* said the cost would amount to two hundred thousand francs, but it is borne by the *Governo* and not by the local commune.

We drove back, and entered Barga just as the last little pink clouds had faded out of the sky; everywhere there were golden heaps of Indian corn lying out in the sun, preparatory to being stripped and ground. In the Lunigiana district the contadini hang the ears of corn in festoons outside their farmhouses, and they add a beautiful effect of colour to the landscape, but up here they seem to grind it at once. The outer covering and leaves are used to stuff the *saccone* or under mattress of the beds, and are turned out, beaten and put back again, with fresh ones added every year. Foreigners are much more particular in attending to their mattresses than we are; and certainly, in the matter of comfortable beds, England is far behind, and in Scotland still less attention is paid to them. There they are looked upon as a kind of institution, like the family Bible, that never wears out, and the result is that they are often extremely uncomfortable, even in houses where every other comfort and luxury is to be found. We were very glad indeed to have seen this beautiful district, and to know that at Castel Nuovo there is a quite passable hotel, in case of wanting at any future time to put up there. But we returned to our quarters at Barga, quite decided that for beauty of situation and for interest it is the

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better centre. Our day would have been perfect had it not been for a letter from the gardener telling us that, notwithstanding the storms all over the country, no rain has fallen at home, a continual high wind always driving the clouds away, and "Signorina, you may imagine how the poor plants look, parched and smothered in dust." It is heartbreaking, and probably means that most of the expensive seeds sown will do no good.

Next day being Sunday, all the padrona's dusky brood had a general clean-up, or as my maid expressed it, a "cat's wash." I upbraided her for the expression, remarking in what spotless order dear Jack keeps his coat. She rejoined that he well might, seeing the example his family set him; and it appears that the one complaint the padrona here has to make of us is our consumption of hot water: "The Russian contessa never asked for any at all!"

On the seventeenth we left Barga, having thoroughly enjoyed our fortnight there, and very glad to have seen and explored this happy valley in its unspoilt condition, before the railway, for which all the natives of these parts are praying, very naturally, comes, to connect it with Spezia on the one hand, and with Modena on the other. Then a big pension will be started, and good-bye to the charm of Barga.

While we were there, the Junior Partner received a letter from a dear old friend and neighbour of ours, that is so interesting that I transcribe it here. It is a reply to one from us describing our arrival at Lucca:

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"What an interesting letter! you make the world roll back to me, *altro* than the sun going back to Joshua! To think of poor, little, pretty, gloomy, creep-mousy Lucca going mad in 1900 for 'La Tosca,' exactly as it did in 1840 for—I *think*, but am not sure, it was for 'Don Cesar de Bazan'! Yes, my dear, ladies were crammed by the half dozen in one pigeon-hole, men slept under billiard tables, and so on. The 'attraction' then was Madame Ungher, afterwards Madame François Sabatier of the Villa Concezione. There was only one handsome hotel in Lucca, the 'Globe.' Happily you escaped the close of that memorable night. An awful hurricane burst over the mountains; the Serchio rose in flood, it overflowed its banks; it deluged the level ground outside the gates, the drains all ran backwards and deluged the streets.—Well, 'Sweet Nancy,' I am very glad you find Barga so *ameno* (we have no word in English to express exactly that Italian state of being), but I fear I am wicked enough to regret the huge earthenware apostles in the most fearful tints, that used to embellish the Duomo. You do not allude to the remarkable beauty of the women: perhaps that also has been 'improved' off the world, as it certainly has at La Spezia. As you are not sufficiently awed by the grand antiquity of Barga and the 'Scabeisgi' of Charlemagne, I fear you will also turn up your dear little nose at a later period of celebrity for Barga and Val di Serchio. In 1745, Maréchal Gage, the Austrian general, at the head of his army, forced the passage (then consisting of mere mule

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tracks) up to the north, knocked over all impediments, joined the Imperial forces in Upper Italy and checkmated the French who had expected the annexation of Milan. The Garfagnana belonged to the late dukes of Ferrara, and, of all men, *Ariosto* (!) was sent from that brilliant court to be the *gonfaloniere* of the head village of that district of goatherds and stonemasons! I believe the name of the place was 'Castel Nuovo.' [We saw the tablet to the memory of Ariosto at Castel Nuovo.]

"Let us return to our own less picturesque times. To-morrow the dear — leave Menaggio and take, very properly, advantage of being 'out' to renew acquaintance with lovely old cities, such as Brescia, Verona, etc., etc., so terribly neglected now by tourists, and yet so well worthy of calm attention, as they all now have museums of disinterred beautiful things, and 'Old Masters' almost forgotten. This will bring them home just in time to get ready for the vintage,— good and abundant this year.

"Mr. — and Mrs. — have already returned from Maresco, a pretty village between Pracchia and Gaviagnana. They liked the place, and the lovely shady woods and clear streams, very much; but in contemplation of the approaching 'circumstance,' as the modest old ladies of 'Cranford' called babies, they could not prudently be so far away from home. Mr. — seems immensely proud and pleased at his paternal prospects (when it comes to the tenth or twelfth he will most likely be less *ingalluzzito*,—cockified! I do think that is such a good word). Miss

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— is at Marnier, La petite Salève, Savoy. It is quite unknown to *Cookées* and tourists, but French families from Lyons, etc., fill the hotel most pleasantly. If you ignore 'Dreyfus' and 'Fashoda' nothing can be more charming than the grace and gaiety of the ladies. The charges, usually so exorbitant in Switzerland, are quite moderate at Marnier. I would advise you, dear, to annex the lively French novel. It is so seldom one can find a French story so amusing and so *true*. All the ladies agree in that. The Tauchnitz rubbish is just the thing to suit 'Sleepy Hollow,' etc., etc., so, as opportunity offers, you can pass it on to dear — at Bagni di Lucca. Most kind remembrances to your Mamma, dearest love, from your bis-grande-tante —."

I have transcribed this letter entire, written by a lady eighty-six years of age, who has spent certainly the last fifty years in Tuscany without ever revisiting her native Scotch Highlands. Her eye is so little dim that she never uses glasses, and her hearing much more acute than mine. Her memory is astonishing, and if I want any information on any matter of flowers or plants, or any antiquarian or historical or artistic subject connected with this country, I have only to apply to her. And she is equally well posted in the newest French novels. She has lived all these years in her own villa on a Tuscan hillside, into which neither parsons nor doctors are ever allowed to penetrate, although on one occasion I did have the pleasure of meeting there that modern Galileo, Padre Curci, who for some years had a modest dwelling near

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her. She is beloved alike by rich and poor, a blessing to the whole country side, and when her gentle spirit departs this life the world will be much poorer and less interesting.

We saw the clouds gathering up as we descended the valley, and on arriving at Lucca found a sirocco blowing, and were hardly able to breathe after the fresh mountain air of the past two weeks. Lucca is one of the most delightful towns in Italy, but also one of the noisiest. The church bells seem to clang more loudly, the donkeys bray with greater spirit, and the blacksmiths bring their hammers down on their anvils with more insistence, than in any other place I know, except perhaps Rome, and not even our outlook on a church-front with most beautiful mediaeval beasts could compensate me for what we had left behind. But the nice clean rooms and faultless table-service of the little restaurant attached to our hotel were a joy after the performances of Mariuccia.

We found Mr. Ruskin's friend, the old sacristan of the Duomo, still above ground, though very feeble. In the course of a chat with him he recalled to me what I had forgotten, that recently discovered plans of the Duomo show the original idea to have been to extend both nave and transepts. Had this been realized, the effect of the interior would have been still grander than it is at present. It also appears that Lucca was originally richer in its stencilled house walls than most Italian towns, but these were whitened over in the time of the plague. But enough of

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beauty and of interest remains to make it one of the most fascinating places in Central Italy.

It is in the district between Lucca and Pistoia that two of the most celebrated of Tuscan health resorts are situated, viz., Monticatini and Monsumano. The former of these, which may be called the Carlsbad of Italy, has a European reputation, and under its able medical director, Professor Grocco of Florence, it has of late years come much to the front. The professor is known as one of the first diagnosists in Europe; he is the clinical director of the great Florence hospital of S. Maria Nuova, and there are few of the poorer class of hospital patients who have not something to tell you of his skill and kindness. Your cabby will turn his head, as the slight spare figure of the great medico drives rapidly by, and inform you with a certain note of pride in his tone, "Ecco il Grocco"—*the Grocco*, the one and only!

However early you may betake yourself to the professor's consulting room in Florence you are safe to find it already thronged; for during the summer he is in residence at Monticatini, and only goes down to Florence twice a week. Many of those who are awaiting their turn are of the contadini class, and whoever may be defrauded of one of the professor's golden minutes, you may be sure it will not be the hard-working peasant woman, handkerchief on head, who has preceded you to the great man's sanctum. The doctor is of Carlyle's opinion as to the relative values of speech and silence; and a *malade imaginaire*, or a wealthy patient *enjoying* bad health, would meet

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with scant sympathy from him. But you will find when your turn comes that, if his words are few, they are worth an hour of ordinary medical twaddle.

The neighbouring Montsumano is little known to English people ; and though in the early months of the season the patients are recruited from Germany, Poland and Russia, by far the greater number of those who submit themselves to a "cure" in its celebrated grotto are Italians.

The little village of Montsumano lies back from the railway station of the same name, at a distance of about a mile and a half, and driving past it, up a slight incline, another half mile brings you to the "Grotta Giusti," — a quite unique and most interesting place, though there is nothing in the character of the quiet pastoral scenery of the country to indicate that anything so remarkable is underlying the ground.

About fifty-two years ago some masons, in searching for lime on the hills above "Montsumano Alto," came upon an opening in the rocks, through which they could dimly discover a large underground cavern; the tradition is that the original discoverer lost his life by falling into this aperture. Some years passed before it occurred to Italian medical science to turn this cavern to account in the cure of certain diseases, and it is only in quite recent years that its appliances have been brought to their present perfection. The land belongs to the family of the port, Giusti, who have leased it for a long term of years to its present enlightened proprietor, Signor Melanie,

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by whom a large hotel has been erected at the foot of the limestone hills, underneath which the grotto lies, and the drip from which, through thousands of years, has formed the fantastic rocks of which it is composed.

Professor Lustig, another of the directors of the S. Maria Nuovo Hospital in Florence, is the resident physician, and under his able superintendence every appliance of modern science has been called into requisition that can aid in the "cure" this grotto is supposed to effect in certain forms of rheumatism and gout, and in gun-shot wounds.

For those living in the hotel there are covered passages leading from it to the entrance of the grotto; these are lit by panes of glass inserted in their ceilings, but, as the entrance-door of the grotto swings back, you find yourself in a dim twilight which would be the darkness of night but for the tiny jets of electric light stationed at intervals; the air is stifling, but it is nothing to what awaits you farther on. At this point the bath attendant meets you, and you commit to her care whatever wrapping you may have worn in the descent from your bedroom, and prepare to traverse the gallery of some three hundred yards in length clad only in the costume used, a long white garment called an *accappatoia*, of either linen or bath towelling. The ground beneath your feet is wet and shiny from the constant drip overhead, and in many places you have to stoop to avoid knocking against the sharp points of the fantastic rock shapes by which you are surrounded; the effect is weird in the ex-

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treme. Passing a point called the "Purgatorio" you finally arrive at the "Inferno," as the large circular cavern is called, where, in a temperature of thirty-three centigrade, you have to pass a penitential hour in the company of as many of your fellow-sufferers as are *en evidence*, all clad in the same white garments; and the scene recalls the early frescoes of the primitive saints in the catacombs. These white linen garments are all left below, and are either washed or dried by the attendants, and in the early morning they are hung outside the bedroom doors of their respective owners, giving the long corridors of the hotel a most curious appearance.

In the height of the season the daily average of patients is three hundred, but not more than fifty are admitted at one time. At the time of my visit, in the late autumn, there were rarely more than fifteen persons present, and I could therefore always secure a bench to myself,—a great alleviation. Garden seats calculated to hold four persons are ranged round, and what it must be to have to occupy one of these in company with three perspiring Italians, I shudder to think. As it was, the atmosphere was sufficiently unpleasant, and after the first experience I provided myself with a bottle of eucalyptus salts.

Dwellers in the south are accustomed to what a friend euphemistically terms "the action of the skin:" you drip and dry, and drip again, and if sitting, as you generally are, in a thorough draught, the effect is rather cooling than otherwise. But the gentle trickle induced by sun heat is as nothing to the rain of the

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grotto, and beneath that you are conscious of something, a kind of second skin, enveloping you beneath your white garment.

The Italian patients assist nature with the wildest contortions of their bodies, and make a liberal display of arms and legs, at which they pound away as if they were kneading dough ; and of course the *cacchieria* is universal,—their symptoms, their sensations past and present, their experiences, all are poured out to sympathizing ears. You sit immovable, with true British stolidity, suffering greatly, though saying nothing, and, while parting with your corporeal substance, you alternately curse the sins of your ancestors, which you feel you are now expiating, and wonder whether they also are working out their own salvation in a still warmer “environment,” your eyes fixed on the large clock at the end of the grotto. Punctually to the minute your attendant appears, and reconducts you to the little cavern where she deposited your wrappers. She envelopes you in a linen sheet, *yashmak* fashion, and then proceeds to swathe you in blankets so firmly fixed round you, that you waddle like a Chinese woman up the short but steep ascent that brings you to the light of day, when you either repose on your bed, or plunge into a hot bath in one of the comfortably appointed bathrooms on the lower floor of the hotel. This latter was my portion, but, indeed, had the professor not named it in my prescription, I must have prescribed it for myself. The joy of that hot bath, and of feeling your clean English skin restored to decency was very great. You proceed to dress, but

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by the time you have traversed the long corridors and stairs and reached your bedroom you are thankful to sink into an easy chair and have a good rest. Such is the "cure" of the famous "Grotta Giusti," and a more unpleasant one it would be difficult to imagine. Fourteen of these penitential hours is the usual term prescribed, but few people can accomplish this number without an off-day of rest, after every five of the grotto, for its effect is most exhausting.

It is extremely curious that though the weather at the time of my visit was wet, cold and stormy, and one was continually sitting near open windows, and of course sleeping with the same at night, I never felt the slightest approach to a chill, and of the benefit of the treatment to stiff joints and muscles there is no question.

Of the excellent management of the hotel it would be difficult to speak too highly. Many of the servants have been there for years, and there is a general desire both on their part and on that of the management to make people comfortable in every way. If any dish presented at the excellent and abundant meals is not to your taste, you are immediately asked what you would like substituted for it; in every way the house is up-to-date,—drainage, electric lighting, abundant supplies of books and newspapers in all languages, including *The Times*, a paper rarely seen in a country hotel in Tuscany, and a good supply of comfortable garden chairs beneath the shady trees in front of the hotel. There is a separate entrance on a very handsome scale for the out-patients, many of whom come

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either from small pensions in the neighbourhood, or drive over from Monticatini or Pistoia, and a long gallery containing cubicles where these can dress and take the prescribed rest on comfortable couches before venturing into the open air, has lately been added to this side of the *stabilimento*. There are also rooms for douche and spray baths, and *portantinas* for patients unable to walk to and fro for the grotto entertainment.

At the further end of the large entrance hall you look down upon a kind of tank of running water, access to which is afforded by a short flight of marble steps on either side, and the wall beyond, which is formed entirely of the same rocks as the grotto, with little jets of water trickling through them. "Ah," I exclaimed to the padrona, "what a place for Baron Le Tour-Marliac's new nymphaeas, and what an effect that rock wall would have if it were planted with ferns!" She seemed rather struck with this idea, and I do not despair of seeing this little horticultural improvement carried out.

Pistoia itself is a very interesting place, and as there is now an excellent hotel there, belonging to the same proprietor as the Grotta Giusti, any one spending the night there, and having a few hours to spare, would find it quite worth their while to go over to Montusmano by train or carriage and inspect the Grotta Giusti, which, during the season from April to October, is daily shown to numbers of tourists, and which certainly would make the fortune of any London or Paris impresario enterprising enough to put it on the stage.

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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We had a most disagreeable and fatiguing journey home; when I first knew Italy the natives hardly travelled at all, the first-class carriages were invariably empty, the second but sparsely filled. Now the people have woken up, and, especially at this holiday season, there is much going to and fro, and, as the officials are absolutely ignorant of all that it behooves them to know, confusion is generally worse confounded. Italians themselves tell you this, but they are so accustomed to think bad administration a matter of course, that they just accept the discomfort entailed.

Our train started thirty minutes late, and when it arrived at Pistoia not even the *capo di stazione* could tell us whether it was or was not necessary to change trains for the south. First we were told that our closely packed compartment went on; then, after sitting patiently for half an hour, it appeared that we all had to get out and bundle into the newly arrived Bologna train, where one of the most unpleasant types of an Italian that I have ever encountered discoursed for the remainder of the journey on the sufferings undergone by Bresci, the murderer of poor Umberto, in the daily régime of prison life, till I felt quite sick. We observed with joy that it was raining all the way along, and on arriving at home had the happiness of hearing that there had been forty-eight hours' heavy rain, which had filled up our cisterns and freshened up the poor parched ground and plants. I always feel the best part of leaving home to be the returning to it, and this time was no exception.

Everything looked palatial, and the house in beau-

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tiful order, under Irma's careful administration. We had left directions for all curtains and carpets to be replaced ; it was very early in the season for this operation, but as we were expecting a friend about the first of October, I preferred to have work-people out of the house. Some painting, however, had been so badly done, owing to neglect of orders given, that the workmen had to be recalled, and for a week we had the annoyance of the scraping off of the offending material and re-doing it, smell of paint-pots, etc., etc. Precision is not to be had here.

Of course the garden had not had time to recover from the drought, but it soon began to pick up ; the tuberoses, that I had feared might be over, were not yet fully flowered, the Japanese anemones along the grass-walk border were abundant and quite lovely.

My first garden occupation after returning home was to check off all the autumn supply of bulbs that had arrived in our absence. Of course the gardener, knowing no language but his own, cannot in my absence undertake this job, and after verifying the different little parcels, I have to explain clearly to him the distinctions of each lot, and very often the colour also, and he then makes his own memoranda in pencil outside each packet. This year I have had bulbs from three different Dutch firms, one of whom I am now trying for the first time, chiefly for irises, on the strength of a very warm recommendation from the editor of an English gardening journal.

Nothing astonishes me more in these days than the mistakes that are constantly occurring in execut-

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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ing orders by business people. It is not your amateur, artist, literary man, or private individual, who blunders, probably because, knowing their own limitations they take more pains and pay more attention. But I find it quite rare nowadays to get any kind of little business matter executed without an expenditure of time and trouble that eats into one's working hours. Bank clerks use private hieroglyphics of their own in your pass-book, and you meekly ask for an explanation. You are told that the whole staff is disabled by influenza, and that strangers have been called in. Your lawyer writes you that certain little amounts will be remitted by a particular date, and three months afterwards you find the matter has "slipped his memory"; he is the kindest and best of friends, so you are only sorry you have had to bother him when he is overworked. Your seedsman in Paris, to whom you have sent a carefully prepared memorandum, taken in alphabetical order from his catalogue, so as to save his clerk's time, forwards the seeds minus one third, as you discover on referring to your little order book, where name and number of seed, price and number of packets ordered are carefully entered for reference, and no explanation is vouchsafed; but when you write to beg the omission may be rectified at once, you are told that some are sold out, and the others are not ready. You wanted to leave them with the gardener, all ready for sowing in the short precious time that is available between the first rains and while the weather is still warm. You write to Erfurt for the deficiencies, and await the balance of the French

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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ones. The second detachment of these arrives in your absence, and as you have left the gardener a list of what to expect, he is able to inform you of what is still unsupplied.

The bulbs are no exception this year to the general run of careless execution of orders. The new Dutch firm had discovered that they had sent only half of one part of the order, and altogether overlooked a memorandum regarding the remainder, and, to do them justice, had written me this, and that they had forwarded the remainder, and rectified their errors in a second *pacco postale*. Accordingly I had written to the gardener to plant *first* this second box. Fortunately he had not had time to do so, and when it was produced, and I had gone carefully through its contents, I discovered it contained the first and missing lots. Eugenio stuck to his point, and I then saw that the poor overladen postman, whose daily round comes to many miles, had delayed leaving these boxes when they first arrived, and had then brought up the second box first. Had I not been at home, all the time and trouble expended on a certain "scheme of colour" would have been entirely thrown away, notwithstanding every precaution having been taken to ensure accuracy and success.

This is a fair sample of the kind of trouble attendant on all garden matters here. I proceed to the boxes sent by the second Dutch firm, celebrated for certain specialties, but whom I gave up some years ago on account of their total inability ever to confess themselves in the wrong. We all make mistakes, and when regret is civilly expressed one has no difficulty in

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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making allowances. But, on more than one occasion, these people were too grand or too busy to inform me by what route they had sent an order, and after repeated enquiries as to this they wrote to say that after the abundant proofs of their care of my interests that I had had I ought to be above asking such questions! Of course the heads of a firm are never aware of this sort of replies sent out by their clerks. So I left them. But this year I had occasion for something I thought they would possibly supply better than I could get it elsewhere, so ordered it, and, as a parcel was coming at any rate, added two hundred and fifty Elwesii snowdrops. When we came to this little lot, I handed back this last parcel to Eugenio, saying, "Ah, those are only the 'Buca-neve,' they'll be all right." But when at the end of the day (for it took best part of a day to sort all this), I retired to my desk, I took up the invoice from this extra correct firm, and found these snowdrops were entered as a new and very expensive kind; so I sent for the paper inside the parcel, to see if it corresponded with the entry on the invoice, thinking the latter must be only a clerical error; the name on both was that of the expensive variety, but the amount charged in the invoice was that of the cheaper kind for which I had written, having always found this particular snowdrop (Elwesii) succeed better here than any other. I wrote at once for an explanation, saying that, annoying as it was to delay planting, which was so important to us before rain came, I did not wish to profit by what I perceived to be a mistake on

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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their part, as the loss to them would have been very considerable. I got back a line in reply, to say that I had written for this novelty, but as I had put the price of the Elwesii against the name of the new one, the former had been sent. Query: why then enter what had been sent under another name? I do not for a moment believe that I made the alleged mistake, as the name in question was one I had never heard of, but I intend to ask that my order-list form shall be returned.

The third lot of bulbs came from my very old friends, Ant. Roozen & Co., of Haarlem, with whom I have dealt for more than thirty years, and to whom I have introduced most of their Anglo-Italian customers. Take them all round they are satisfactory, and when they do make a mistake are always courteous in expressing their regret for it, and in making such amends as they can. Of course it is very annoying when, instead of a row of parrot tulips coming up just where you had planned that particular and gorgeous item, a frightful "mixture" of something that has no relation whatever to its surroundings appears; this happened to me last year, and as several friends made the same kind of complaint, I wrote to admonish Ant. Roozen to greater care. My order to them this year was mostly for bulbs to make up what had damped off of last year's supply, and various what they call "restitutions" were also sent. Bulb effects are very much a matter of price, and I cannot afford a new supply of hyacinths every year, nor is it necessary if the bulbs be carefully dried and put away.

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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As the contents of their parcels had been ordered mainly from Eugenio's memoranda of deficiencies, I was able to hand this lot over to him without much bother. But when I retired to bed that night I felt I did not wish to hear the word bulbs again for some time.

It is also very difficult at present to convince people that you are likely to know your own business better than they can do. Some few years ago, I sent Ant. Roozen my annual bulb order, apt to be a pretty large one, rather earlier in the season than usual, as we were leaving home for three months, and when we are away I like to have the garden entirely off my mind. I gave them most precise orders as to the date of despatching this by *petite vitesse*, which for many reasons we prefer to sea passage to Leghorn and railroad from there to Florence. When I was up in some mountain region I received a communication from A. R. saying in the most cheerful manner that as there was a steamer just sailing for Leghorn, they were sure I would commend them for having sent this box by it, I should receive it ever so much sooner, etc., etc.

I think I said *accidenti*, and in Tuscany one cannot go beyond that! I replied, pointing out that this box would probably arrive at its destination a full month before I returned home myself, and would either remain shut up at the Customs, or be at the mercy of my gardener, whoever he then was,— I have forgotten.

The sequel was even worse than I had pictured. We returned home, no box of bulbs had been "advised" from the Custom house; so I sat and possessed

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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my soul in patience. One day I got a frantic letter from Ant. Roozen inclosing an intimation that if a box, etc., were not claimed, etc., it would be sold to pay expenses ; imploring me to send instantly to the *Dogana*.

Now I never send an Italian servant on any such errand, as they would only be shoved aside. Of course no Italian lady would so far demean herself as to pick her steps in the mud surrounding both the *grande* and the *piccola stazione* : she probably has a functionary paid by the month or the year to do all such disagreeable errands for her. But any eccentricity is pardoned to a *signora forestiera* and I always go on these errands myself. So I arrived at the *piccola velocità*, and making known my business, I was first of all answered that no such box had ever been heard of ; secondly, after long delay, that three *avvisi* or advices of its arrival had already been sent to my house (N.B. no one of these had ever arrived there). Then they began to hunt, fruitlessly ; during this time I occupied myself with a pleasant letter to Ant. Roozen. Finally, just as I was leaving, a big man came in ; he was appealed to ; had he ever heard of such a box ? " Oh yes, and it had been put into the room with the unclaimed goods that were to be sold next day." *Ecco !* Could I have it out, and at once (having already sat there one hour). Well he thought not, it was after hours, and the room was shut up for the night. This time I did not say *accidenti*, but I smiled and I wheedled, and the box was got out.

Since then Ant. Roozen have been very careful to

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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send packages in the manner indicated in the order form.

From the twentieth until to-day (thirtieth), weather intensely hot, and a sirocco blowing, which just seems to sap one's strength ; and we sighed for the fresh breezes of Barga. On going to Alinari to procure some photographs of the Barga pulpit, we were much provoked to find that he had one of another beautiful pulpit in a church at Brancoli. Now Brancoli is quite close to Lucca, and it would have been so easy to drive there, if we had only known of its existence. I must say I fail to see the use of writing to England for a copy of the New Murray for Central Italy, when places of such interest and so important artistically are not mentioned in it. I found a mention of it in poor old Miss Stoke's book "Six Months in the Apennines," and wrote at once to the friends we had left at Lucca to go and see it. The reply is :

" We are much obliged to you for telling us of Brancoli. We drove there yesterday afternoon (it lies not far from Ponte a Moriano), and found it a most interesting old church. The pulpit is wonderful (the writer had not seen the Barga pulpit), so are the font and holy water stoup and credence table, and there is a beautiful altar-piece by Della Robbia, ' St. George and the Dragon.' Besides all this, the view is splendid, as the place stands high on the side of a hill overlooking the plain." — Clearly *not* a place to have missed.

To-day we seem to be having the fag end of the storm that has been devastating the towns all along

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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the coast from Savona to Genoa, and I see in the papers that the railway line is interrupted. Eugenio receives compliments on the tuberoses which form a fine hedge outside the drawing-room windows, two hundred of them in about forty large pots ; the trusses are really fine, and with pots of *Salvia splendens* intermixed the effect is very good ; and I hope to have them photographed to-morrow. But for once I confess myself beaten in the matter of scent. I can stand a good deal in that way, but this year, between the heat and the heavy scent of these two hundred, I feel rather overcome.

It has poured in torrents all day, and there will be no more scarcity of water for this year. Eugenio, who is really very careful of his "effects," lifted the pots of the outer rows of tuberoses into the *stanzone* this morning, and returning early also carted our best double begonias in under shelter. It is a real good fortune that the rain has waited to come till the vintage was finished. It has been going on all the week, and the weather could not have been more perfect for it than it has been ; it makes all the difference in the keeping quality of the wine if the grapes are gathered dry, as they have been this year in this neighborhood, where, however, the yield is about twenty-five per cent less than it was last year.

It is very unfortunate that greater attention is not paid to making Italian wine : it is often of excellent quality, but the uncertainty attending ever getting what is ordered, or of the wine of one season ever resembling that of another, is a fatal barrier to its being



TUBEROSES



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## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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placed in the English market. I have several English friends employed in vine-culture here, and their wine finds a ready sale in England because it has been properly handled and will keep. But with Italian methods there is no certainty, and some years ago when Prince O—— went himself from Rome, to endeavour to negotiate in London for the sale of his very large stocks of wine, he found it impossible to do any business. English people like to know that they will receive what they order, and will not run the risk of getting a totally different article from what they have already tried and approved of. Immense quantities of grapes are sent annually from this country by Marseilles to the French growers, to be worked up by them and incorporated into their own harvests. Seventeen years ago, a Palermo correspondent of *The Times* endeavoured to draw attention in the columns of that journal to the possibilities of Italian viniculture. His observations are so applicable to the present day situation that I transcribe them in full, hoping that some result may ensue from a perusal of them.

### *ITALIAN WINE*

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT AT PALERMO)

It seems as if the Italians were to be the last to appreciate the commercial importance of the vine to their country. There is an apathetic conservatism in the national character which, above all things, revolts from being disturbed in its routine by any call from the foreigner; which serenely sets the standard of all things in Italy, and practically assumes that the foreigner must come here to learn — that the market must adapt itself to the wines, not the wines to the market. It is a trait of that Chinoiserie which belongs more or less to all old civili-

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zations, to nations which progress has left to plume themselves more on the past than on the future. Now and then we may find a native wine-grower who has a more catholic taste and an unwonted enterprise, who, as far as his *tenuta* goes, will watch and improve the process of making his wines ; but in general there is the most entire indifference to any foreign opinion, and one may picture the Italian wine-grower as saying to the outside world — “Here are my wines ; they are, as we know, the best and purest in the world ; if you like them, take them as I make them, if not, all the worse for you.” Even the most evident appeals of self-interest do not disturb his self-satisfaction. The attention which *The Times* paid to Italian wines some time ago was so productive of results on the foreign demand that the principal wines to which attention was called rapidly rose in value on the spot from fifty to seventy per cent., and on applying last spring for a barrel of Brolio, I was informed that there was not a barrel in stock of any year, except the last, which was not yet fit for delivery. On asking the reason of this extraordinary scarcity of the wine, the agent replied that “It had all gone to England.” The price of the bottled wine, for which we used to pay one franc fifty centimes, say fifteen pence, bottle and *octroi* included, is now two francs fifty centimes, and as the past two vintages have been bad, the quantity and quality both of this year being below the average, and the quality last year still lower, it is to be feared that future supplies of all the wines in foreign demand will be eking out by processes of which the Italian wine-growers have not thus far had much need.

With every advantage of nature and every inducement of commerce, the wine-making of Italy is substantially where it was twenty years ago, though the growth of markets and the ravages of phylloxera have doubled its money value. Wherever it is practicable the grape is sent to France or Germany to be made into wine ; where it is not, the wine often goes to be transformed, and the owner of the vineyard congratulates himself on getting double the price for his grapes, and thinks no further of the matter. One may count on his fingers the great vineyards in Italy on which the processes of making the wine have followed with any earnestness the demands of foreign trade.

In Tuscany especially, where the general quality of the product might be most easily assimilated to the taste of the most profitable

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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markets, there is most reckless treatment of the grape and the most niggardly treatment of the vine. The latter may be what it will, a vine once in bearing is as good as any other ; everything goes into the same vat, and if it is not deeply enough coloured, blackberries, whortleberries, the elderberry, and even that species of the elder whose berry is so nauseous as to be untastable, the American pigeon-berry — which is cultivated for that purpose — any fruit or natural product, in fact, which is cheap, and which will deepen the colour of the wine, is freely employed. And for this reason all deeply coloured Tuscan wines should be suspected of being made of mixed grapes ; nothing coming amiss, it is impossible that they should have a natural deep colour.

And yet during the past year I have been supplied with pure wine from Sabatier's estate at the price of one franc a flask, equal to about forty centimes the bottle, and there is a great deal of Tuscan wine sold outside the limit of the *octroi* at sixty centimes the flask. If there were an unworked gold mine in the Tuscan hills, it could not have the importance for the prosperity of the country that the vintage might have under careful and provident treatment.

And no country in the world is capable of such an augmentation of the value of its vinicole industry and even of the quantity of its raw material as Italy. It is only in Piedmont, Lombardy, and the Veneto that the vine, treated by nature as a step-child, finds the careful culture of art — in proportion as nature is exuberant the care of *vignero* decreases — and the Barolo, Barbera, Nibbiolo, and other wines of Northern Italy less known, are in general, if not so attractive wines, more trustworthy, and strike one at once as made more conscientiously, though even here one is occasionally annoyed by the inequality which, being the prevailing fault of Italian wines, is more and more prevalent as one goes south. Leaving the Brolio and Pomonio (white) apart, as the only central Italian wines which have tolerable certainty, there is no other wine in Tuscany of which one can order two samples with any probability of having the same wine. As to the so-called Chianti, it is hardly a distinctive name. The wines of Monte Pulciano, Monte Fiascono, of the Adriatic slopes, and the Romagna are so uncertain that one may call for a wine one drank last year at the same inn and not recognize its relation.

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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me a home-cured ham from England, and at that time it was possible, after the medical authority of the Customs had been paid a fee of five francs to "viser" this desirable object, to get possession of it. Since then the prohibition has been more rigorous. I wish that attention could be called to another matter, viz., the prohibition of every bulb or green-leaf from England. Great Britain, having neither vines nor phylloxera, did not join the Berne Convention. Consequently, while plants and bulbs from every other European country, no matter how infected by phylloxera, are allowed entry here (with a certificate of origin), everything of the kind coming from England is rigorously excluded. That is to say, the Italian government prohibits plants and bulbs from the one country free from phylloxera—not that they are therefore kept out, as there is an organized system of agencies who pass them in for a consideration. The Ministry of Agriculture in Rome is able to give a *permesso* for this, but practically that is a dead letter, being always refused.

## *Chapter X*

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### *Autumn in Tuscany*

*October 2, 1901.* To-day we scented the first whiff of "Olea fragrans." I have never seen this delightful shrub in England except at Kew, but as my English gardening days are matter of very ancient history it may now be better known there.

It is of Chinese and Japanese origin, and its flowers are used in China, among others, for flavouring the choicest scented teas, most of which are sent to Russia, and are seldom seen in England. It is a common shrub in Tuscan gardens, and in the first autumn I spent in Tuscany, more than thirty years ago, it was a continual puzzle to us to know what the delicious scent was that greeted us from every garden wall as we drove along the country roads. The shrub is a slow growing one of no particular beauty; but the white flowers, which are of the most uninteresting appearance, like the small heads that go to make up a good spike of mignonette, and are attached to the stem and almost hidden under the large green leaves of the plant, give out the most delicate perfume. I know of no other scent to which this can be compared so as to give any idea of it; it is as different in quality from that of any other flower as is the flavour of the mangostine from that of any other fruit, and, like it, the difference is that of its extreme delicacy. Autumn is its proper flowering season, but it will occasionally flower in spring also, when the winter has been mild and open. I have a large old plant of

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"Olea fragrans" growing in the azalea bed as you enter the court-yard, and English visitors are always much exercised to know from whence the delicious scent is coming. Here it is quite hardy in a sheltered place and in *castagna* soil, our substitute for peat. Nearly all our autumn cuttings have to be re-taken, as very few of what were made four weeks ago have survived the hot, dry fortnight in September when we were absent.

To-day I have been putting up various little boxes of garden treasures to send to friends in England, chiefly of our beautiful yellow-berried ivy, and the *fimbriata* iris, now I believe known as *Iris japonica*, more like an orchid spray in its habit of growth than an iris. It grows wild in great abundance in the neighbourhood of Tivoli and does well with us in shady nooks. The subsequent report of this from a well-known Surrey garden was, that even under glass it is a "shy bloomer," but, as a botanical friend in Essex tells me he has flowered it by the side of a pond in his garden, I conclude the dry air of its Surrey quarters did not suit it. These reminders of gardening difficulties in England are a wholesome corrective to grumblings here! Eugenio raised his eyebrows and whistled when I told him of the beds of tulips mentioned in *The Garden* as being kept under glass lights in order to preserve the "guard leaf."

We are slowly recovering from the evil effects of the September drought, and as relays of poisoned meat have been inserted between the tiles of the roof and the ceilings, I trust the rats may cease from

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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troubling and give the big Niphetos rose a chance to recover from their assaults. It is already sending out new shoots, as indeed are all the tea roses. At this season the lemon-scented verbena is a great joy: I do not care for the little snips one gets of it in England, but cut from our hedge in liberal quantities, as it is here, it is a delightful thing with which to fill old farmacia pots in the drawing-room. And the "Polygonum elegans" is now fit to cut and has a lovely effect hanging down from shelves and brackets. There is a fine show of Salvia splendens which with ordinary weather should last another month in flower, when the plants will be potted and put in the stanzone for winter cutting; then their bed will be dug over and prepared for our double anemones.

The fresh, cool north wind is driving the mosquitoes into the house for warmth and shelter, and they are much more troublesome now than during the hot weather. Jack has begun to forsake his shady corner and to seek the sunny slope of the court-yard,—all signs that autumn has begun,—and the one group of chestnut trees in our landscape view is taking a tinge of yellow, preparatory to its glow of crimson.

It is not often that one finds in a newspaper article such a perfection of counsel as the following:

"Excess alone is injurious, whether in the case of alcohol, tobacco, tea, coffee, meat, sweets, or any other article of diet, or in regard to such matters as sleep or amusements. But what is excess? asks the seeker after truth. Why, taking more than is good for you. Then how much is good for me? That you must

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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decide for yourself. Nobody can tell you, for nobody else can possibly know. I may add that when you have learnt exactly how much of anything that this life affords, whether for the body, the mind, or the soul, is good for you, and have learned to indulge yourself up to that point, and no further, you have learned practically the whole art of living."

If London doctors would print this little sermon and place it in their waiting rooms for the benefit of patients, not only would the latter find it much superior to the dreary literature generally offered them *pour passer le temps*, but their minds would be better prepared to receive the medico's words of wisdom; to be sure it might have the opposite effect of rendering these last superfluous. If one wished to put the whole matter into a silver bead, such as the Mecca pilgrims wear round their necks with a text of the Koran, two words would express it — "Recognise limitations."

Perhaps there may even be found people so unappreciative as to yawn, and say that writers about gardens have more need of this precept than any other section of the literary world.

*October 10.* The weather continues magnificent and the whole countryside is flooded with mushrooms! which every one is engaged in drying for winter use. The price of these for the Italian pound of twelve ounces is one sou, but as it takes that quantity to make one ounce of dried ones, a good many kilogrammes are required to make a sufficient pr for winter consumption.

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Grapes also are most abundant; the other day I bought good black ones and the yellow "columbano" from a contadino for thirty centimes the kilogramme (two and one-fourth pounds English). These would not have kept for hanging, but were excellent for immediate use. Peaches and figs are not so plentiful this autumn as usual, owing to the wet spring which so greatly benefited our flowering shrubs.

The photographs are a great success. The moonlight nights just now are so beautiful and the air so fresh that it is really a pleasure to lie awake and look at the lit-up court-yard, and breathe the air. I know Jack says to himself, "What stupid people humans are to remain shut up in beds all night when they might be out in the open with me." When I was young I used to think sleeping on deck on shipboard the height of bliss, but that was in the tropics.

*October 11.* To-day the new wine is being removed from the big *botti* or vats in the lower stanzone to the contadino's cellars in the upper *podere*. It is a day when every one comes to taste the wine, and there is much general rejoicing. These particular contadini are so nice that they give us no annoyance during this work and never injure a single pot or plant when passing to and fro. But this morning a very annoying piece of damage was done to the long shrub border along the grass walk. While the gardener was at breakfast some one crept through the shrubbery and literally cut up one of our two variegated Pittosporum -'s; it had been done with a knife and by some one who understood perfectly what he was about,

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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either to make cuttings or to export for sale ; it will take the plant three years to recover this onslaught, as they are things of very slow growth. I know very well that the robber is the head gardener of the villa, who expresses the greatest grief at this misfortune : " he would rather anything of his own should have been spoilt than that I should have suffered annoyance." Quite a Tuscan incident, particularly in this expression of regret.

*October 30.* During these last three weeks I have had many opportunities of visiting the gardens of friends and neighbours, and see clearly how much our own has suffered from our inadequate water supply during the drought of August and September, for never have we been so poor in flowers as this autumn, the finest in point of weather that I ever remember here. It seems as if the warm days were loth to depart : ten days ago we had forty-eight hours of wind and rain, but that passed off, and it looks as if a St. Martin's summer would follow the St. Luke's summer that we have already had.

The *Cosmea bipinnata* is now flowering in every garden — I believe I was the first person to grow it here. Having seen it in the autumn of 1895 in Scotland, I brought the seed out, and now every one here has it.

The most striking thing I have come across this autumn is a new hibiscus, the leaves of which are a very dark and glossy green and deeply serrated, and the flowers of a pale lemon colour, most striking and beautiful.

## *In a Tuscan Garden*

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Chrysanthemums are late everywhere, not at all to be regretted in our case, as, until the summer contents of the courtyard are removed to their winter quarters, there is really not room for our two hundred pots of these, and when they come into flower late they will go on till Christmas.

The autumn flowering of Saffrano roses is just beginning. There is no table decoration for the month of December more beautiful than these roses with berberis leaves, which by that time have taken on tints of dark brown and red; nothing can surpass this combination in beauty.

What time I have been able to steal from social duties for gardening matters has been spent in making out a list of some new roses for planting this autumn. The names of many of these are astounding. French names of roses always convey a sense and meaning, but who can interpret such mysteries as "Bardou Job," "Billiard at Barri," or "Blairii No. 2"? and if the enthusiastic people who write to the various gardening papers on the relative merits of their favourite roses would initial the names so as to enable one to classify them, their descriptions would be much more profitable, and readers like myself would be saved infinite labour.

I spent seven hours in two days trying to classify the roses that have been named during the last few months in *The Garden* and *Country Life*, by Monsieur Guillot's catalogue. It would seem such a simple thing for people to add a "T." or "H. T." or "H. P." after the name as the case may be. French catalogues

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are admirably precise in their definitions, and the want of or the addition of a "Madame" or a "Monsieur" before the name may make all the difference as to the page on which you will find the rose indicated; and patience and eyesight are both sorely exercised, to say nothing of the time wasted by inattention to this very simple detail and by want of accuracy and precision in the nomenclature. I learned this lesson myself some years ago, when we made a halt at Lyons for the express purpose of visiting some of its famous nursery gardens. Monsieur Guillôt was unfortunately absent from home, but his wife courteously showed us over their grounds in which I hunted vainly for a rose, which, somehow or other, I had persuaded myself was called "Comte Benoit." The unfortunate woman was quite puzzled and vexed at her inability to discover what I wanted, and subsequently I was much abashed by a letter from her husband suggesting that when people wanted "Monsieur Benoit Comte" they should quote him correctly! Whereby I learned a lesson and pass it on.

A few of our more delicate plants have already been housed, but Tuscan gardeners incline to leaving things in the open as long as possible, and even hold that most things benefit by a touch of cold so long as they are got in perfectly dry.

The *Olea fragrans* is still flowering and so is *Choisia ternata*. — We hear of crops still standing out in Midlothian and of snow six inches deep farther north. And when I remember this time last year when, in the genial west of England, a pall of white mist covered

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the face of the land for the greater part of the fortnight I spent there, I feel thankful I have not to contemplate a residence under such climatic conditions. Tuscany can be cold enough in all conscience, but at least it is, as a rule, a bright cold, and one knows it will not last. The autumn flowerings go on up to Christmas, and the first snowdrops may be looked for by the middle of February. The pansies sown in September are now all pricked out in boxes, and if they go on as well as they promise at present, ought to make a great show in March or even earlier. And mignonette sown at the same time is a quite respectable size.

This autumn olives promise to furnish a record crop, and the prediction is that the roads and valleys will run with olive oil. An Italian friend tells me that the short olive crop of last year made a difference in income to a relation of his, a proprietor in the Val di Nievole, of one hundred and seventy-five thousand francs. That is a very large sum in an Italian income. A good olive crop can only be looked for once in three years. Wise people will lay in a provision of both the first quality of eating oil, which is an article that greatly improves by keeping, and the third quality for burning in lamps, as the price this year will probably be very low and another such abundant harvest may not occur again for years.

*November 1.* Ognissanti or All Saints' Day. Fourteen years to-day since we became Tuscan residents ! Then as now the day was ideal, crowds of people out on foot and in every kind of vehicle, visiting the cemeteries, the whole town decorated with wreaths, and

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me a home-cured ham from England, and at that time it was possible, after the medical authority of the Customs had been paid a fee of five francs to "viser" this desirable object, to get possession of it. Since then the prohibition has been more rigorous. I wish that attention could be called to another matter, viz., the prohibition of every bulb or green-leaf from England. Great Britain, having neither vines nor phylloxera, did not join the Berne Convention. Consequently, while plants and bulbs from every other European country, no matter how infected by phylloxera, are allowed entry here (with a certificate of origin), everything of the kind coming from England is rigorously excluded. That is to say, the Italian government prohibits plants and bulbs from the one country free from phylloxera—not that they are therefore kept out, as there is an organized system of agencies who pass them in for a consideration. The Ministry of Agriculture in Rome is able to give a *permesso* for this, but practically that is a dead letter, being always refused.

## *Chapter X*

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### *Autumn in Tuscany*

*October 2, 1901.* To-day we scented the first whiff of "Olea fragrans." I have never seen this delightful shrub in England except at Kew, but as my English gardening days are matter of very ancient history it may now be better known there.

It is of Chinese and Japanese origin, and its flowers are used in China, among others, for flavouring the choicest scented teas, most of which are sent to Russia, and are seldom seen in England. It is a common shrub in Tuscan gardens, and in the first autumn I spent in Tuscany, more than thirty years ago, it was a continual puzzle to us to know what the delicious scent was that greeted us from every garden wall as we drove along the country roads. The shrub is a slow growing one of no particular beauty; but the white flowers, which are of the most uninteresting appearance, like the small heads that go to make up a good spike of mignonette, and are attached to the stem and almost hidden under the large green leaves of the plant, give out the most delicate perfume. I know of no other scent to which this can be compared so as to give any idea of it; it is as different in quality from that of any other flower as is the flavour of the mangostine from that of any other fruit, and, like it, the difference is that of its extreme delicacy. Autumn is its proper flowering season, but it will occasionally flower in spring also, when the winter has been mild and open. I have a large old plant of

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"The rich arrive in their carriages, bringing exquisite wreaths and floral tributes, the poor on foot; and most touching it is to see the latter, men bowed down under the weight of a heavy iron cross, borne on their shoulders from the distant quarters of the Prati or Testaccio; women carrying pots of flowers carefully tended, candles, or little oil-lamps, whose cost has been laid aside, soldo by soldo, at the price of self-denial. There is something pathetic in watching these toil-worn sons and daughters of the people moving straight to the lowly mounds where they have laid their dear ones; kneeling down, they pray long and fervently, hot tears dropping on their hard brown hands, which smooth the earth with such tender touches.

"To weep for the dead is sad, but sadder still would it be to find no tears to shed on their graves. On this day it is the dead who irresistibly attract the living, for the festival of Tutti Morti wakens slumbering pain to live again; memories well nigh effaced grow green once more by virtue of this general commemoration, the bond of common impulse unites the vast black-robed crowds assembled here; high and low, prince and pauper, all have tender memories, hallowed associations, connected with this spot. Each modest hillock has its wreath or cross of fresh flowers, laid there by loving hands; the graves disappear beneath their bulk, and from afar those scattered blossoms produce the effect of an immense perfumed garden.

"As daylight wanes we turn our backs with the crowds on the narrow paths and numerous monuments, where the black shadows of guardian cypresses

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fall dark and heavy, blotting out the forms of wreath and cross, their sweet odour mingling with the dank smell of rotting vegetation, and the little twinkling lamps lit on each grave burn brighter by contrast, till, as the night wears on, they too gradually go out, and God's Acre is left to another year of silence and isolation."

This description applies to Rome, but here in Tuscany it is not only on the first of November that this stream of country pilgrims prevails: for days afterwards the roads are full of them, and one's heart aches for the unfortunate horses that, day after day, have to drag the overladen omnibuses and diligences up the steep roads by which the two principal cemeteries are approached.

I said something of this to Eugenio, who looked at me almost with indignation and said that this year the horses might be thankful that, owing to the long spell of fine weather, they had at least no mud to encounter! I wonder what we would think in similar conditions: day after day of ceaseless toil, beginning early and prolonged till late into the night, dragging loads far beyond our strength, blows from the cruel whip, insufficient food, and then expected to be thankful because there was no mud!

*November 8.* A week into which small annoyances have been crowded. Eugenio has had "a relapse" into the native ways out of which I am always endeavouring to drag him. Before we left home instructions were given him to order a plentiful provision of cow-manure, a difficult thing to get here when one

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has not his own *podere*, as few beasts are kept and the contadini generally require all the manure for their own land in autumn. Remembering difficulties in former years anent this desirable article, and with the new roses in view, I charged him to bespeak a sufficiency here and there if our own contadini could not spare all we required.

On returning home, almost my first enquiry was as to this transaction, and I was assured that the stuff was ordered and promised. Being determined that full justice should be done to the new roses, I desired him to begin at once to prepare the ground for their reception, giving him minute directions as to the due proportions of soil and "stuff." I was met by the assurance that this previous idea of mine would involve much waste of his valuable time, and that he would prefer to wait the arrival of the roses before beginning to prepare their quarters. I intimated that my views were different and that unless I saw preparations made for their reception I would write to counterorder the roses.

Meantime I sent a message to the contadino, and found that this was the first he had heard of our requirements. On requesting an explanation from Eugenio, I was informed that he had *not* ordered the manure because he knew he could get it when he was ready for it; *also*, he had *not* covered the newly planted hyacinth bulbs with leaves as directed, *because* last autumn when I was absent in England he had not done so, and they had done quite well without that additional fatigue on his part.

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That is the true young Tuscan all over, the leading idea of his creed is, not *your* orders or *your* wishes, but that *he* knows best. I expressed my opinion of his conduct in forcible terms, told him he was a most promising young anarchist, etc. He was much aggrieved and said that if he had robbed the house I could not have made more ado. That is the way in which one is always being brought up against the stone wall of want of perception of relative values and positions, the result of the total lack of discipline among the youth of this country. The household were all down upon Eugenio for annoying his padrona, and his discomfiture was completed by his chrysanthemums proving a great disappointment. Two years ago he failed with them, and was greatly mortified and said that *next* year they would be different, which I believe they were, as friends wrote me what a good show they made. He quoted this in excuse, and I had to point out that that only aggravated the annoyance of this year's flowering being so inferior, as having once achieved success, there was nothing to prevent him from improving in this detail every year! His intellect was not quite equal to this argument, so he had to shut up. It would have been useless for me to tell him that the chrysanthemums being inferior did not annoy me half as much as discovering that he had neglected my orders and then told a lie to conceal his fault. The explanation of the inferiority of the chrysanthemums was quite simple, as he calmly informed me that instead of planting his cuttings singly in thumb-pots he had lumped them together in boxes and large pots. Now,

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in spite of a statement in a recent number of *The Garden* that the latter arrangement is equally good, I take leave to doubt this being so, even in the careful hands of our experienced English gardeners ; here, where no plant is ever lifted with a proper ball of earth about it, the joint plan is fatal. I have great belief in the value of "processes," holding that if the preliminary steps are not attended to, results will not be satisfactory. Fortunately the contadino could still spare us what manure we required, and did so willingly, as he was most grateful for little attentions shown to his eldest daughter, just dead of tuberculosis at the age of seventeen. It was sad to hear of new boots, white kid gloves, etc., being placed on her wasted limbs before she was laid in her coffin, but the family would not have been satisfied if these usages had not been observed. They made little moan for her : "it was better for her and for them that she should go." This was undeniable, but I could have borne a little more regret. However, one should not judge by such phrases of what they may have felt.

Another very provoking thing has been, hearing from friends in England that a large consignment of the beautiful Tuscan garden pottery which we had ordered for them, and the packing and carriage of which had amounted to as much as the price of the articles, had arrived with fully half of its contents hopelessly smashed, probably from careless repacking at the English custom-house, one of the worst and most troublesome to be met with.

*November 15.* All our garden bulbs are now planted

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and only a few for potting remain to be done. We continue to cut quantities of roses from the garden and the buds of both "Ideala" and "Laurette Mes-simy" open in water in the warm rooms better than if left on the plants at this season.

*November 19.* After three days of drenching rains and heavy mists the sun has again come out brilliantly, so we hope to get some pruning of our spring-flowering shrubs done. *Spiraea prunifolia* is to be induced to ascend as a pillar plant instead of spreading to width in hedge-fashion, as his tendency is, and a beautiful hedge he would make; but the effect when the long sprays of white hawthorn-like blossoms fall down from a tall sustaining support is even more lovely, and to-day we have cut away much of the side growths of our plants.

The great drawback to this settlement is that we are embosomed in tall trees and shrubs which are absolutely neglected. When Mrs. Earle came to see me in the summer of 1898, and to revisit the scenes where so much of her youth was spent, she had not words to express her feelings at the state of the shrubberies, and asked me *why* I did not persuade the owner to turn his attention to clearing and thinning out! Why indeed!

We might even be ourselves cleared out. The "Commendatore" has many tastes, but they lie in quite other directions; and as he shows a Gallio-like indifference as to how his place is kept, there is no one to pay any attention to the proceedings of the two old gardeners, one of whom is half childish, and

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they practically control everything. They lie, they cheat, they steal with impunity, and we have the greatest difficulty to get such cutting done as will ensure us a fair share of air, light, and sunshine on the southeast side and protect our own shrubs from being smothered by overhanging branches. No reasoning ever moves these two old fiends from any position they choose to take up. When I addressed a vigorous remonstrance to the secretary this autumn I was met with the excuse that the gardeners were now too old to climb the larger trees. I offered to get a professional *boscaiulo* (forester) at my own expense. This offer was accepted, clogged with the condition that their men should direct and superintend the work, as, observed the Teuton, "I know what your cutting means, Madame; it is *extirpation!*" I was rather disgusted, but it was perhaps better so, as had *we* done the work immediately round our own house as it ought to be done, or even in a modified degree, much unpleasantness might have arisen. Even with the very moderate removal of dead wood (all of which falls to them for firewood) the gardeners have made themselves as disagreeable as possible. It is very sad to see so much neglect and mismanagement and to think of "what might be" in garden-loving hands in this most beautiful spot and with every advantage of climate.

I heard yesterday of a lady who has lately inherited from a distant relative a property in England of some four thousand acres, on which its last owner, when he retired from active political life, had expended thirty

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thousand pounds, not from the point of view of ever getting an adequate money return on the outlay, but just from love of an old family home, to the improving and beautifying of which he devoted, in his later years of leisure, all the powers of an intellect of which Cardinal Newman said he had never known its equal. That type of residential landlord is only to be met with in England; certainly in no other European country could you find its parallel.

This example would be an object-lesson for the reviewer of Mr. Norris's "Consolations of Lady Caroline": "There is still the garden!" I am not sure that in such circumstances as those in which Lady Caroline found herself, the possession of a garden *would be* a consolation, for it would be so heart-rending to know that it must go without many needful things. Personally I would go on half-rations any day rather than see the plants want, but that is not everyone's view, and the Junior Partner occasionally hurls at me the reproach that it is fortunate she does not aim at such a standard of perfection in the appointments of her kitchen department as I consider indispensable for the well-being of my flowers. I fear I must own to many of the misdeeds of garden-loving people as reckoned up by Mr. Norris's critic, in such matters as boring horribly family and friends by horticultural hobbies, and cribbing five or ten minutes from the dinner-hour to rush and see if something has been done or left to the favourite southern "to-morrow." Blessed are they who possess such an experienced and conscientious gardener that

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they have no occasion either to give directions or to see whether work has been executed.

We have just had an illustration of the frantically jealous nature of the Tuscan.

The garden plant-stand which screens the stanzone door was quite worn out (not surprising after fourteen summers and winters), and on asking our village carpenter what a new one would cost he named a price which I found quite reasonable. But a few weeks later, when I was about to give the order for a new one, the price was raised by twenty-five francs, to which I naturally objected.

The original stand was a second-hand one bought from a gardener in the neighbourhood, who had no further use for it, and I asked this man either to try to find me another or to get me one made. This he undertook to do. Unluckily I forgot to warn him to send or bring it home after dark, and it arrived one morning, having *en route* passed the shop of our own carpenter, who, rushing out, fell upon the unhappy gardener. "So you've turned carpenter, have you? —that's the stand I should have made," etc., etc., with much bad language interspersed. Two days later my carpenter sent in his bill, which in an ordinary way would not have reached me till the beginning of the year, and then it would have been left to me to pay it at my convenience. But this time it was accompanied by a letter, studiously polite in phrases, but setting forth the affliction suffered by the writer after his long and faithful services, at seeing himself supplanted by another, and expressing his deep regret

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that circumstances will compel him, unless he receives the amount due to him within a week, to put the law in execution to enable him to recover his just dues. Never before having received an epistle of this kind, I shewed it to an Italian friend who advised me to take no notice, as the man had evidently written it in a fit of pique and would soon regret having run the risk of losing so good a customer. This prediction was verified, for on my sending a servant to point out that the bill contained some items not belonging to this mansion, the unhappy carpenter was found tearing his hair, and wondering what demon had inspired his composition; but, as he said, "Imagine my feelings: I who had always entertained such an affection for the signora, to see her prefer another!" — here I believe he shed tears.

The carpenter's views of his vested interests in the orders and payments of this house recall to me the experience of a friend who bought a property a few miles away from here, on which very extensive alterations were required. The chief local builder was called in and desired to furnish estimates, which the lady, a new-comer in Tuscany, but a very shrewd and practical business woman, thought very high. Several other lesser lights were consulted, and each in turn furnished an estimate rather higher than that of number one. My friend was rather surprised, and spoke of the matter to an old Anglo-Italian proprietor, who offered to send his own builder to survey the premises and quote a price for the proposed alterations.

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This man was walking up the steep road leading to the new-comer's villa when he met the local magnate of his trade in that district, who greeted him cheerfully. "Ah, good-morning, S——, what brings you into this part of the world to-day?" S—— explained his errand. "Oh ho!" shouted the other, "then, my, friend, you may turn and go home, for I mean to have the doing of this job." He proceeded to explain that when his estimates had not been received with favour, he had called together all his *confrères* and instructed them, in case any of them were consulted in the matter, that they were to quote a price just a little higher than his own, assuring them that they would not thereby be losers in the long run. S—— heard his tale, turned on his heel and returned to his own home, calling as he passed at the villa of his employer to inform him of what he had heard, and to intimate that not for king or kaiser would he put his foot into such a hornet's nest as existed on that hillside. There is a fine mediæval flavour about these proceedings.

The weather continues its April-like sun and shower; delightful as it is, it is distinctly unhealthy, and doleful predictions of "an influenza winter" are beginning to be heard. Tuscans dread this damp mild weather more than extremes of heat or cold;—the latter they consider their due at this season, and their constitution seems to require a dry, sharp cold, with bright sunshine such as the typical Italian winter used to offer. The heavy mists that have been so common of late years are entirely a modern innovation; what

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causes them I do not know, but of their unhealthiness there can be no doubt.

English gardening exiles must feel most grateful to Mr. Edward Mawly for his very practical and helpful letter in *The Garden* of the seventeenth instant, entitled "The Modern Rose-Garden," giving a list of roses, classified both as to sorts, colours, and time of flowering, in which he refers to the new edition of "Hints on Planting Roses" as giving the most satisfactory selections of exhibition and decorative roses ever published. I am rather surprised that in his own list he does not include among the yellows "Madame Bérarde," here one of the very best, suiting the climate much better than its parent, "Gloire de Dijon," and invaluable in the late autumn if only for the beauty of its foliage apart from its deep, rich, apricot-coloured flowers, so substantial and standing so long in water.

"Gloire de Dijon" never succeeds here so well as in a northern climate, and indeed I have never seen it grown so successfully in England as in Scotland, where cottage walls and porches are often covered with its fine blooms. Here the only chance for it is a north aspect, and the same applies to "W. Allen Richardson," "Souvenir de Malmaison," and "Captain Christy,"—the second, i. e. autumnal, flowering of these two last-named varieties is much finer than the first.

To-day a good basketful of roses was gathered just before a heavy storm which would have spoilt their beauty. After the best of these have been bestowed

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on the drawing-room, the very respectable remainder makes quite a fair show in my own winter sanctum, where most of my day is spent when indoors at this season. It is a small room opening into a large, long bedroom ; both face southwest, and outside their window runs the imitation balcony on which the Niphotos is trained ; and from one odd small window, which has no connection in size or level with the others, one has a view of the whole length of the grass walk. Both these rooms are stencilled in pale yellow, the design being copied from a Morris paper, and both are carpeted with a thick dull Indian red Wilton, so, when the door between them is open, there is no break in the effect of colour ; the curtains and *portières* are of yellow tapestry with Chinese dragons and other quaint devices upon them. I do not know if these are of Oriental make or a French copy ; twenty-five years ago they came from a large Oriental warehouse in London, now no longer existing. There are various bookshelves, enamelled in the same pale yellow, and filled with vellum-bound favourites ; a comfortable sofa is piled with Oriental covered pillows ; one or two easy chairs, a couple of small tables, and my own desk complete its simple furniture, but on the walls are some of Sir Joshua's beauties, old Bartolozzi prints, and water-colour sketches of rooms in my old English home. There is hardly anything in this room that has not been in use for thirty years, and as most of its decorations have been picked up by ourselves in our travels up and down the world, it is for me full of associations with old times, and realizes

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George Eliot's dictum that there is no rest like that given to the mind by the sight of familiar surroundings.

To-day an old ginger jar is filled with long ivy sprays, and dark red and pale pink Bengal roses cut in branches about half a yard long ; I like to see the buds as well as flowers of these, and our rose hedges can afford them ; the white and yellow roses fill an old brass mug bought in an Arab coffee shop near the Boulak museum in Cairo ; Tall "La France" and other pink cousins are in old *faenza* jars, and the heavy heads of "Reine Olga" are in dumpy green glasses ; pale blue "Iris stylosa" fill a smoky glass by themselves, and as I look round I feel that this little collection is not bad for the latter end of November, even in central Italy. In one corner of the room is a Ginori terra-cotta stove, with its comfortable looking wood basket well piled on top with *pini* and *forme*. These *forme* are a great Tuscan institution, they are little round cakes made from the refuse of tan-yards and are the colour of cocoa-nut fibre ; two or three placed at the back of a wood fire throw out a great heat and they are very economical fuel, costing only six or eight francs per thousand, according to their size. As for *pini*, they are the first necessary for fire-loving people,—fine large pine-cones from which the seeds have been extracted, and one of which, well alight, kindles up a wood fire in a very few seconds ; and if two or three are thrown on a dormant mass of wood and *forme* you have a blaze fit for the gods. These pine cones are a real source of income to those

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who possess extensive pine woods, first by the sale of the little white kernels of the seeds which largely take the place of almonds in Italian confectionery, and, secondly, in the value of the cones themselves, which sell at five francs per thousand in the country, but would cost more in a town. Formerly the seeds were extracted by hand from the cones, and fifty years ago this industry furnished employment to women on the vast Borghese plantations of these trees near Pisa and Viareggio, but for many years machinery has been employed to extract them. These "pinoli," as the kernels are called, are also excellent when roasted and eaten with salt after dinner, just as we should use salted almonds; they have a peculiar nutty flavour and I always find them much appreciated by friends in England, who have eaten them here, and to whom I often send them by the useful Italian sample post. As for the pine-cones themselves, I confess that I feel lost whenever I happen to be in a district where they are not in use; in Rome fires have to be kindled with horrid little bundles of wood shavings or twigs, but these are a poor substitute for the resinous pine-cone which gives a blaze imparting a feeling of *bien-être* to us northern fire-loving folk.

To return to the blue Stylosa Iris, I have heard it recommended for dinner-table decoration, but fear it would not light up well. One of the prettiest of these that we have ever achieved was a mixture of the small, wild, yellow Antirrhinum (toad-flax or shepherd's purse) with variegated periwinkle. The Junior Partner brought in a large bunch of the former from

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a neighbouring hillside, and of the latter we have abundance in the garden. This blend had a most delicate and dainty effect in old Venetian glasses both by daylight and candlelight.

The continuance of the rains must sorely disquiet the owners of olive groves; dry bright weather is what is now required to ripen the magnificent crop of these, and if the rains continue they will be quite spoilt. Of all harvests in this country the chestnut crop is the one which most uncertainty attends. The chestnuts ripen so late (in many of the mountain districts not till November), they are consequently exposed to gales and storms, and often blown down before reaching maturity. And the importance of that crop to the poor inhabitants of mountain districts can hardly be overestimated, for chestnuts form the staple article of diet with them, and when they fail the misery is great indeed. The finest chestnuts obtainable hereabouts come from the Pistoiese mountains, but they are not so fine as the large Naples chestnuts called "marrone." These used to be obtainable in London from that great purveyor of many Italian good things, Piccirillo in Wigmore street, but he has disappeared, and the shop is quite changed now.

*November 27.* We woke this morning to find a clear blue sky and brilliant sunshine. The distant lower Apennines are covered with snow, and the air is sensibly cooler. The effect of the distant snow, gleaming in the sunshine, is fascinating. This Tuscan landscape looks its winter best when the combination of

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snow, deep blue sky, and sunshine is arrived at, and the poor contadini will welcome the change from such muggy damp weather as has of late been our portion. Eugenio has been busy all the morning housing such of the more tender plants as were still in the courtyard, and I advocate putting up the winter wooden shutters on the old windows of the stanzone ; these are merely closed at night and removed during the day when the house stands open to air and sun, but in foggy weather they are, of course, kept closed even during the daytime.

The roses are "advised" from Lyons, so their advent may be looked for in a day or two, and, meantime, the ground will have time to dry.

The bright dry weather has been of short duration. We shall probably hear of a heavy gale somewhere, for the aneroid has suddenly dropped a full inch, and rain has again fallen in torrents. Of course, all garden work is stopped, except the little that can be done in the stanzone, and that is not much at this time of year, whereas, in the garden itself, there is a good month's work wanting to be done.

The Florentine paper, the *Nazione*, had a most amusing paragraph in its issue of yesterday entitled, "The cost of a Ministerial Family in England." It says :

"Listen to this. As prime minister, Lord Salisbury takes every year 125,000 francs, his son, as under secretary of state, 37,000 francs, and his nephew, as first lord of the treasury, 125,000 francs; another nephew, president of the House of Commons, has

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50,000 francs, his son-in-law, 102,500 francs, and lastly, another nephew, 62,500 francs. Summed up, the Salisbury family take 502,000 francs yearly! If such a thing were to happen in Italy the heavens would open! At least I hope that no one will ever again cite to me, as an example, virtuous England!"

What would be the astonishment of this critic and of his readers, if it could be brought to their comprehension that the private incomes of these men are on a scale that makes the amount of their official salaries of very little, if any moment, and that in the case of the Prime Minister, no money could compensate him for what he gives up in health and leisure to serve his Queen and country. As a critical young diplomatist said to me not long since, "There is something very fine in the way Lord Salisbury sticks to his work."

Tuscan newspapers are very sad reading. In Rome and in Milan are to be found newspapers with some pretensions to what we are accustomed to consider journalism. But those published in Tuscany have but one idea, sensationalism. Delight in the horrible is their leading feature: "Horrible Fact," a child has fallen out of a window; "Dreadful Crime," a man has had his pocket picked; "some one was hurt and taken to the hospital," and, alas! the usual percentage of suicides. This forms the daily reading of the youth of Tuscany. Veracity does not count. Some years ago the life and death of Patti were shouted about the streets of Florence; next day there was a short disclaimer: Madam Patti was alive and well.

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This sort of piling up the agony is of daily occurrence, so that one says, "Oh! well, I saw it in the Italian papers, but that of course proves nothing." Then when some murder of more than usual atrocity has to be reported, every detail is gloated over, and generally much more sympathy is manifested for the murderer than for his victim. One frequently hears in this country of people, after years of steady well-doing, breaking out quite suddenly into crime, with apparently no motive at all. In a recent murder case of a peculiarly aggravated and unprovoked description, when a master tradesman was slain by his assistant, as he was mounting the stairs to his own room, a leading Florentine banker, in commenting to a friend of mine on the extraordinary contrast the previous record of the assailant offered to this development, spoke of him with much regard as having always been a *figlio delizioso*.

The accounts of the damage done in Rome by the rains are terrible, a great slice of the embankment of the Tiber swept away, and grave fears are entertained that the foundations of the whole may have been undermined. The English Protestant cemetery and the Basilica of Saint Paolo *fuori mure* have both been flooded. The practical result will probably be seen and felt in a very unhealthy winter in Rome. Here the wind has set in for tramontana, and there is now a prospect of the ground drying sufficiently to admit of the garden being thoroughly sorted up, which it very much requires. The roses arrived in excellent condition and are all planted, but some have been sent that

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we already have, and did not wish to duplicate, in substitution for others ordered but not in stock. This is very annoying where space is so limited as it is with us, and had I only been given my choice of substitution we could have had more of the beautiful yellow and apricot shades in Noisettes and Bourbons.

As I cannot in this weather stand about in the garden, I am obliged to have Eugenio in frequently to settle details and have to trust largely to him,—not a very satisfactory way of gardening.

The storms have swept off nearly all the remaining leaves from the deciduous trees near us. The Chimonanthus alone shows no sign of parting with its foliage, which it generally does before flowering, but this season is an exception; it is a delightful thing to bring into the house, a few sprays of it scenting a large room.

*December 13.* We are now having a spell of the most beautiful Tuscan winter weather it is possible to imagine, clear, bright, sunny days (with a touch of frost morning and evening) which enable us to get the flower-beds raked into order.

The large cage of turtle-doves outside the dining-room windows has had to be removed to the shelter of the sunny *soffitta*; they have said grace for us before meat, and returned thanks thereafter, all the summer, but these last few days they sat on their perches looking rather miserable with their feathers all huddled up.

Jack walks about the house looking like a sheep, with a splendid coat and a large ruff. To-day an er-

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ratic snowdrop (*Choisii*) has pushed through the ground. The Italian mind does not readily grasp the idea of any association with flowers : a *Cypripedium insigne*, that costs half a franc per flower in the florists' shops, they can see the sense of prizes, representing, as it does, half a franc ; but a snowdrop is a *capriccio* of the Inglesi, and in their eyes a supremely foolish one. I am very devoted to cypripediums also, but our few pots of these have not this year many flowers upon them, and I therefore prefer leaving these on the plants, which occupy a sunny east window in the warm dining-room, standing on a shelf I had made for them. I never see these flowers without thinking of an old Scotch friend here, who was, as I regret to say so many of my dear country people are, a great respecter of persons. One day I found her with a tumblerful of these flowers on a table beside her chair, and on my remarking what fine cypripediums they were, she turned a reproving eye upon me and said with great dignity, "These are orchids, and they come from the villa — ! I was greatly amused and said, "Very likely they *are* orchids, but they are cypripediums all the same, and this particular variety is called *Insigne*." She was much mystified and had a slight suspicion she was being chaffed, but I did not attempt to enlighten her further. Now this is a good instance of the point of view from which many people regard flowers.

Miss — was really fond of these, after a fashion, but she had got hold of the idea that orchids were the aristocrats of flowers, and therefore to be held in high

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esteem, and these particular specimens being grown in the garden of a countess, were doubly valuable. This good woman would have been much surprised if anyone had called her vulgar, but it was once said of her and her sister by a candid friend, that the "——'s hills were always higher than other people's hills." On this occasion she seemed to me on the same level with a young person who, hearing some of her "foes-in-law" lamenting the recent death of a first lord of the admiralty as a national loss, delivered herself of this remarkable utterance: "I can't think what you all see in this Mr. Smith: he was a bookseller in the Strand!" The same young person one day praised a piece of furniture, saying it was quite "Chippendaly." She had not the faintest idea of what Chippendale furniture was, but she knew that just at that moment it was the correct thing to admire.

I have myself heard an adorer of Botticelli remark of a particular landscape, that it was quite "Peruginesky." I find the same note of vulgarity, i. e., pretence and affectation, in all these cases, and both are so much worse than mere ignorance.

But I have wandered from this present thirteenth of December, when I had meant to chronicle that yesterday we sowed both our sweet pea and Shirley poppy seed. The latter, Mr. Wilkes very kindly sent me with the Royal Horticultural Society's printed directions as to their culture. I had this paper very carefully translated into Italian, and handed it to Eugenio for his guidance, and was rather pleased when he came to ask: had I observed that the seed was to

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be sown in February, and we were only in December? This showed me that he was really paying attention to the matter, and I explained to him that in England seeds sown at this season would have a poor chance, and that our Shirley poppies were not due till June; whereas, here, it is essential to get both these and sweet peas into bloom in April, if possible, as the hot sun of May would wither them up in a few days.

Looking at the beautiful chrysanthemums and roses that have been brought in this morning I feel my longings for a greenhouse to be somewhat unreasonable. We have never had flowers in such abundance so late in the year, and the drawing-room is as good as a conservatory, its warm west aspect making it a most cheerful place in these December days. There are quantities of *tazzetti* out, in the florist's shops; we do not grow these, being able to buy them very cheaply, and having so little room I greatly prefer to give the space to freesias, the most satisfactory of all the early flowering bulbs.

I hold very much to arranging flowers with their own leaves, but this does not apply to chrysanthemums, and as many of those I was placing in pots and jars inclined to droop, I tried supporting them with branches of green euonymus with the happiest effect, the scarlet berries of the latter heightening the colour of the flowers. When I speak of pots and jars I mean old majolica *farmacia* jars, in which flowers always look doubly beautiful; and for roses, nothing can beat old brass *scaldini*. The first primulas have been brought

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in, and are not much to boast of. I have never yet seen a primula or cyclamen properly grown in Italy, i. e. the flowers well in the centre of the plant and rising above the encircling leaves. This is one of the many instances of the want of scientific culture so conspicuous in all horticultural matters here.

The eupatorias continue to flower; I have no recollection of these in my old gardening days in England, but they are most useful winter things for decorative effect, so feathery and graceful. Our violets are very late in flowering, and the double Neapolitan ones that are being hawked about the streets have probably come up from the Riviera.

*December 21.* The day after I wrote the above was brilliantly fine; the day following we woke to find the whole country enveloped in a dense white fog. This has continued ever since; to-day the sun is making a feeble effort to struggle through, but we can only see the distance of a few yards from the house. This state of atmosphere is unprecedented, and no one ever remembers such a visitation. The most curious part of it is, that down in Florence the air is comparatively clear, while on our height, and even in places considerably higher, this dense mist prevails. I hear that the scientific explanation of it is, that it is caused by a cross-current of winds, so to say, the sirocco meeting the tramontana; whatever the cause the results are most unpleasant. Going out into the garden is impossible, and I am therefore entirely dependent on Eugenio. On the fifteenth I had settled with him about an errand he had to do on the following Mon-

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day, the seventeenth, so when I saw the state of the atmosphere, I did not disturb my mind as to what might be going on in the garden, knowing that this message would occupy the morning. While dressing I heard a sound of chopping, and rushing to the window I beheld the *berceau*, in the centre of the four rose-beds, in a state of demolition, and the creepers, which, having been planted fourteen years ago, had now reached a very considerable height, on the ground. It is true I had mentioned my intention of removing this old structure, the supports being quite rotten, but so far from having given orders to begin the work at this particular juncture, I had told him we would ask an English gardening friend and neighbor to come and help us with his taste and counsel in the matter. To this the reply had been that that was wholly unnecessary, as he, Eugenio, knew perfectly how the work should be done, and was, therefore, in no need of advice from *Il Capitano*. Now at this moment, as he very well knew, this gentleman had been called away from home, so, whether he thought he would embrace the opportunity of exercising his own judgment unfettered by any superior (for he well knew that to me going out and hanging about in the wet fog was an impossibility), or whether it was, as he said, his great anxiety to push on and finish all such garden work by Christmas, in accordance with my wishes, I find it impossible to determine. But this I do know, that the anxiety of all classes in this country to meet your wishes as Christmas approaches is very remarkable. It is a frame of

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mind of which I always take advantage to the utmost, knowing that on the twenty-sixth or twenty-seventh of December the alacrity to fulfill every little obligation will not be nearly so apparent. Rolling myself up in a fur cloak, I went out the few steps required to bring me to the scene of devastation and gave what directions I could as to the new erection, and the disposition of the creepers, but to stand in the fog to superintend the work was impossible, and I had to retire under a torrent of assurances from Eugenio that he would make a most beautiful job of it. I felt that he remained master of the situation, and even that short exposure resulted in rheumatism that has kept me a close prisoner ever since.

*December 25.* The fog continued for nine days and nights; on the ninth day rain fell in torrents, which seemed to have the effect of dispelling it, and yesterday was really fine, dry and sunny, so the people were able to set about their Christmas preparations. The Florence shop-keepers must have suffered severely from the bad weather, as Tuscans will not *flâner* about the streets unless it is fine. To-day has been brilliant, and this morning the effect of the sun reddening the distant snow recalled the Monte Rosa.

Never, in all our years of residence here, have we had such an invalid Christmas as this year. I have myself been more in bed than out of it since the fog began. Our dear Irma, who thinks for us in every way, has the prospect of an operation that will necessitate her going to a hospital; Eugenio, who fills the wood baskets and does many small things about the

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house of a morning, came looking like a Prussian grenadier to announce that for some mysterious reason he could not bend his back, and had to be put to bed strapped up in lumbago plasters ; and, finally, the cook, overcome by the heat of his kitchen fires, fainted, and cut his head open as he fell !

Any social doings are impossible, but, as one gets on in life, the great pleasure of Christmas lies in the various small additions one is able to make to the comfort and happiness of others, and here very little goes a long way towards peace and goodwill.

Although I have disclaimed "recipes" I will make a present of one to those who have had patience to follow me thus far in my chronicle, and it is of so excellent a quality that I am sure they will forgive all tedium when they drink it ; it is a tipple compounded of pineapple, sauterne, and champagne, and is perhaps better adapted to a Henley luncheon than a Christmas dinner. If wanted for lunch you must take your pineapple and cut it up the previous night, not cut in thin slices in the thrifty fashion of a London butler,—a pineapple should never be touched with even a silver knife, but should be torn into irregular lumps by two silver forks ; any old East or West Indian knows the trick. Lay the pieces in a large bowl (a soup tureen answers admirably), and pour over them a bottle of sauterne. n. b., it need not necessarily be the finest Chateau d'Yquem. Let this stand all night, and just before it is wanted pour in a bottle of champagne and ladle out in glasses, or, still better, in tumblers ; do not add any abominations of herbs, or liqueurs,

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or soda-water, and consider the above quantity as sufficient for four persons. This is an old reminiscence of Sunday luncheons in the Philippine Islands forty-five years ago, and I shall be much surprised if this generation does not approve of it as much as did their predecessors of that day.

The fog of course effectually spoilt the few remaining flowers in the garden, and the florists' flowers cost a ransom, so our decorations were limited almost entirely to foliage effects, red and bronze berberis, and branches of the large-leaved *Mahonia Bieli*, sprays of bamboos, and the bright-blue berries of the *laurestinus* — and they were really quite beautiful. By to-morrow we shall get in a good haul of the wild asparagus to wreath round the pictures, and hope that by New Year's Day we may all be in a more festive condition. The postal service, is, as usual at this season, entirely disorganized. Christmas cards of course have begun. Nothing seems to me so to stamp the characters of the senders of these as the selections they make! The mean rich buy them by the dozen at the stores, and after writing two sheets full of inane matter on the thickest of paper, proceed to stuff into the already over-weight letter one of these treasures, and despatch it abroad with a penny stamp. So, for this treat, you pay half a franc. Next comes that large section of one's fellow creatures with the best intentions, but void either of artistic taste or of any perception of fitness; to them one card is the same as another, so long as they get it off, and discharge their social conscience. From one of these we received to-day a cheap, highly glazed

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photo of a picture in the Pitti Gallery. This, sent to us, living, so to say, under the shadow of Alinari's beautiful work, was certainly remarkable, and, to complete the effect, it was not even put between boards, but doubled up so as to effectually crack it in the centre, and shoved inside a paper bag such as bakers use for a penny scone! Lastly, there are the chosen few, generally those with little money to spend, and none to waste, who, when making their purchases, take some trouble to select just the right and appropriate card for each individual friend — several of the cards sent by these last are so dainty and artistic as to be a real pleasure to look at, and can be used for sick children's little treats and scrap-books.

*December 31.* The last day of the century, and the new pergola is not yet begun ! but the garden is in fair order, and all the pansies are planted out. I am so glad to see that that successful rosarian, Mr. Molyneux, defends the plan of carpeting rose beds, so to say, with some spring-flowering undergrowth. It always seems such a waste of space in a small garden *not* to do so, and when the ground is kept so well manured as ours I have never observed that the roses suffer from an undergrowth during the early spring months.

## *Chapter XI*

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### *A Tuscan Winter*

*January 2, 1901.* "Ring out the old, ring in the new," and let us hope that *fin de siècle* has received decent burial, and that we have now got rid of this most tiresome expression, with its false and mischievous ideals. The first news of the century in Italy is the joyful intelligence that there is hope of an heir to the house of Savoy; and the sun has also come to cheer us up: quite glorious weather, such colour everywhere.

I went to the hospital to see our poor *cameriera*, who has shown the greatest pluck and courage under a very painful operation, and is most patient and uncomplaining. The hospital arrangements are most comfortless, and we have been sending her daily supplies of food. To our ideas the way the patients' friends are allowed to carry in food and wine to them is very strange; but years ago I remember an old French priest, a patient in one of the best Florence hospitals, saying to English friends of ours that he must have died of starvation had it not been for what they brought him. It is most difficult to induce the poorer classes to go into hospital; they regard it as sealing their doom.

I have been much vexed by the discovery of various shortcomings on Eugenio's part which have obliged me to remind him of my rule that any accident or damage of which I am told at once is made good at my expense, but that what I am left to dis-

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*cover* he has to pay for, and get a scolding into the bargain. He has now been here for nearly four years, and, as I tell him, after the trouble I have taken in training him I feel it to be only reasonable to expect to be able to depend upon him for care and forethought, and I have pointed out to him that, being myself no longer able to get out in all weathers to superintend, I could not continue with any one whom I could not fully trust, so that unless he can pay more attention I should be obliged to send him away and get an older man, which I would much regret being obliged to do. For once he had no recriminatory remarks to make. I hope he really will amend, not only in certain small careless ways, but in the very disrespectful manner he displays when found fault with. Besides being very honest and most industrious he is, *au fond*, very goodhearted, especially where pets are concerned. But, indeed, Jack may be said to rule every servant in the house, and there is not one who would not fly for his bath towel to rub him dry when he comes in with his fur sopping wet, or for his numerous small *plats*.

January 4. Alas! the snowflakes are falling lightly, the ground has the hard, dry look of frost, and a general air of misery pervades all the plants in the court-yard. The azaleas in particular have a certain droop that tells how unhappy they are feeling. The air is full of snow, and the cold desperate. This morning in my southwest room, after a good fire had been burning for three hours, the thermometer only marked forty-seven degrees, and at night, in the adjoining sitting-room, after piling up wood all day, the tem-

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perature was only fifty-seven degrees. To people whose idea of comfort is seventy degrees this is a real *soffranza*.

In the afternoon visitors from town enquired what blossom it was that was falling lightly in the court-yard! By to-morrow the snow will probably be felt in the lower region of the town. Fortunately a large supply of *forme* was delivered this morning. Horses are never frosted in Tuscany, so that in severe frost they cannot go out, cabs and omnibuses cease running, and there is no getting about, especially in such a hilly district as ours. This does not often happen, but I have seen five heavy falls of snow here in one winter, and the keen, dry Tuscan cold seems to defy clothes and fires, and only an unlimited consumption of food and stimulant enables one to resist it; unfortunately the machinery of the human frame refuses, after a certain age, to assimilate these, so this remedy is worse than the cold. I had a large bunch of chimonanthus cut and brought in this morning: it is scenting the whole house and is much happier indoors than left on the tree. One cannot understand how invalids survive the sudden changes of temperature here. Two days ago the sunshine was really ideal, and on the night of the first I was sitting at a dinner table where the roses and carnations, all from our host's open garden, were quite a sight: to-day we might as well be in the Engadine.

*January 5.* Last night, for the first time in many years, I slept with the windows closed; the tramontana was blowing furiously, and the cold was such that it

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required some courage to undress, but as no wood-work can resist such extremes of heat and cold as prevail here, a good deal of fresh air is admitted, even with heavy protecting curtains and portières. Jack, who, happy cat, has all his "claes" on, as we once heard a Scotch cook informing a parrot was his case, slept indoors, and lay rolled up on a little table by his mistress's bed. He breakfasts with me, after which my eiderdown quilt furnishes a suitable place for a digestive snooze, and this morning, when the painful duty of getting up could no longer be deferred, I presented him with my hot-water bottle, and it was amusing to see how affectionately he embraced it.

The cold is simply excruciating, but I have ordered out the "pig," as it is impossible to go on with only the wood fire on the open hearth. Now the "pig" has no connection with pork, though I confess the name raises a longing for the nice crisp morsels of bacon on an English breakfast table. This Tuscan "pig" is of American invention, and is a small portable iron stove, in shape distinctly recalling the animal after whom it is named. A jointed pipe fits into it at one end, and is inserted into the chimney, at the other end is a small door, with a regulator for the draught of air. It is supported by four slender legs, and stands on a sheet of iron so as to protect the carpet from any possible singeing; a lighted pine cone is inserted, and two or three small pieces of wood, and in a surprisingly short time the room is heated to a temperature that no fire on an open hearth would ever give. Of course the heat is of the dry, unpleasant kind, inseparable from a closed

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iron stove, and one misses the companionship of the cheery wood fire. But the cold has reached the stage when, in spite of being swathed in clothes, one feels as if sitting in his skin, and when warm air throughout the large room is an absolute necessity if one wishes to avoid illness.

The American general who invented the "pig" had probably been driven to desperation by the cold of Florentine apartments. Americans are known for the exaggerated heating of their rooms; and hotels here, frequented by that nationality, are heated to a degree that most British folk find very trying. However, I always bless the inventor of the "pig," which, besides heating up a room quicker than any other stove with which I am acquainted, has the further merit of being easily moved about from one room to another, and of being very inexpensive to start with, as well as of lasting in good order for many years. The philanthropist would probably say, "If you, pampered people, with your fires, hot bottles, warm clothes, and good food, feel the cold so much, what do you suppose the poor contadini do in such weather as you describe?" But the philanthropist would make a mistake, as he so often does, for this dry sharp air does not afflict the Tuscan as does either muggy damp or the summer heat; in the latter, indeed, he simply collapses, saying, "non si resiste," and damp he looks upon as a most unjustifiable visitation.

So far as the winter landscape goes, nothing can be more beautiful; the ground is white with frost, and the sun shining brilliantly; in the olive yard beyond our small domain the trees are tossing their silvery heads

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as if they positively enjoyed the fierce tramontana wind that is howling round us, and beyond them the belt of dark cypresses is gently swaying to and fro. But behind *them* there is an ominous bank of storm-cloud, charged with untold reserves of snow ; the lower Apennines have a dim and misty look, though the sky overhead is still blue, but the higher peaks are altogether clouded out of view. When this wind drops we shall probably have a heavy fall of snow and then the cold will be less excruciating. I know of no instrument of torture to compare to a tramontana : an Edinburgh nor'easter is nothing to it ; the men draw their cloaks across their mouths, and the women cross their woollen head-scarfs a little more tightly as it sweeps them down the road. Tuscans look on snow as the greatest possible benefit to the land, not only because it destroys insect pests, but because it soaks into the ground in a way that no rainfall, however heavy, does, and so enables vines, fruit-trees, and crops generally to resist better the torrid summer heats.

On enquiring from Eugenio this morning if the big Azorre and the Tecoma *jasminooides*, planted beneath the windows of my summer bedroom, were all covered from the cold, I was assured that, in the case of the former, no protection was necessary as, having stood the frost of the memorable fourteenth of December, 1899, when we were absent in England, nothing would harm it. The Tecoma ? Well perhaps the Tecoma *might* be the better for protection ; he would put a little straw round the roots as he already had to the "Gaggia." Nothing provokes me more than

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this foolhardy line of conduct. A few days ago offshoots were taken from the old monster plants of *Yucca gloriosa*, which had grown so as to block the walk near the cancellino door ; any sane person seeing this storm impending would have thought to tie up the leaves of the poor things and wrap straw round their newly severed roots. Not at all. These refinements are left for the "padrona" to think of and suggest.

January 7. For four days and nights this horrible wind has raged, and not only from the north but sweeping round from every quarter. Yesterday the Arno was frozen, and great blocks of ice are being cut from it for storage. To-day the papers are full of the sudden and tremendous cold in Rome and Naples, and in every part of Italy and Austria ; quantities of snow in the Abruzzi, in the hill districts around Naples and even in the streets of Rome. Trains are everywhere delayed for many hours by the snow. Here the wind has somewhat dropped, though at intervals a gust sweeps by us just as a reminder that the *tramontana* fiend is lying in wait ; the frost continues unabated, and though the sun is shining brilliantly the cold is intense. Still, to-day is mitigated affliction, and, where I write, with the western sun streaming in, the thermometer actually marks fifty-seven degrees ; and we have been spared the nuisance of the children's Epiphany trumpets, for none who have a house to remain in would willingly venture out. Such of the servants as availed themselves of the holiday returned in a quite raised frame of mind at the intensity of the cold.

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*January 12.* The weather has returned to its normal winter condition, with bright, cold days, but, as an indoor temperature of sixty-five degrees can be achieved, even people who can no longer tramp about are fairly comfortable.

Very sad tidings reach us of the terrible damage done by the cold to all the spring crops, both of early flowering bulbs and vegetables, at Naples and along the Riviera. It is so hard on the poor contadini who have no appliances for protecting their produce in such an exceptional season as this. At San Remo even the pink ivy-leaved pelargonium is all destroyed by the cold.

It is a week to-day since dear Irma returned from the hospital, where her courage and patience made a great impression. We only allow her to get up for a few hours in the afternoon, when she reclines in the warm, comfortable dining-room, much consoled by having a little needle-work given to her. The days are terribly long to a person accustomed to a busy, active life, and who, not being able to read or write, cannot occupy herself as we should do in a similar position.

*January 19.* The weather is magnificent, and Eugenio is busily engaged on the new pergola. The poles of this did not appear to me to be very firmly fixed, and finding that his inspection of the one from which we took the idea of ours had been of so perfunctory a nature that he did not even remember its height, I insisted on his breaking off work and going again to look at the original. He was aggrieved at

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my want of confidence, and returned in an exalted frame of mind to assure me that if the original was described as silver, ours, i. e. *his*, certainly merited the epithet of golden. This poetical outburst quite overcame me, and I felt myself taking up the refrain "as is moonlight unto sunlight," etc. The *Capitano*, to whose critical taste and judgment we are so often indebted, having returned from a short visit to England, looked in upon us yesterday, and was pleased to express his approbation of Eugenio's handiwork, with a qualifying suggestion of an alteration that he thinks would strengthen the structure. Wistaria is a terribly heavy thing to support, and ours have grown in most rampant fashion. This affair of the pergola confirms me in an old-fashioned belief, now quite out of date, that the average man does almost everything in life, including getting good value for money, better than the average woman. By which reflection I do not for a moment mean to insinuate that this particular *Capitano* is not far above the generality of the "average man."

*January 21.* The frost has given way and has been succeeded by soft, gentle rain; the blackbirds were out very early this morning, busy on the grass walk, and on my desk is a tiny bunch of snowdrops.

We drove into Florence to see the pictures from the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova in their new quarters. They are admirably hung in two newly opened rooms of the Uffizi Gallery, and the great Van der Gōes triptych has now a chance of being properly seen. It is strange how few people seem ever to have heard of

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these pictures, much less seen them. Devoted as I am to the Tuscan *quattrocentisti*, I remember the first time I saw this picture, feeling almost as if it were worth all the others put together. Van der Gōes must have kept macaws ; the angels' wings, which are lined with the feathers of macaws, are evidently painted from the life. It is a magnificent picture, and the tradition that it was painted for Folco Portinari, the father of Dante's Beatrice, makes it very interesting. There are also two beautiful Memlings and a lovely Botticelli in this collection, but the hospital authorities have reserved the portrait of Mona Tessa, which is only natural, considering her intimate connection with them. The long dispute over the possession of these pictures has been settled by the hospital, while declining either to sell or to cede them to the State, having agreed to accept an annual rental for them from the government, and they can now be seen much more easily, as well as to greater advantage, than in the damp, vaulted rooms where one formerly had to go to look at them.

Yesterday was the feast of St. Sebastian, and as he is one of the patron saints of the Misericordia, the doors of its headquarters were thrown open and the chapel brilliantly lit up, the façade decorated with the usual scarlet and gold lace, and a crowd thronging its steps all day. In front of the entrance, little booths were rigged up for the sale of all sorts of things, from loaves of bread to rosaries.

We were much aggrieved that our favourite cabby did not bring us the usual offering of little cakes of bread on San Antonio, which festa occurred a few days

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ago. It used to be one of the prettiest sights of the Roman winter, thirty-three years ago, to see the blessing of the animals outside the old church of San Antonio Abate ; all the Roman princes sent their horses to enjoy this benediction, and the animals were led along in files by grooms wearing the quaint old liveries of that time, coats of every shade of colour trimmed with curious old embroidered galloons ; the church steps and the adjoining ground were strewn with sprigs of box, and the whole effect was picturesque to a degree. San Antonio Abate has never been a very popular saint in Tuscany, but even in quite recent years the cabmen used to go round on his day with their little offerings of bread, and received a few *soldi* in return.

*January 22.* Again two days of fog succeeded by frost — such rapid and constant changes are most trying both for plants and humans, and very difficult to deal with. For once Eugenio has displayed more prudence than his padrona, and though the rose-hedges were pruned yesterday, he expressed the opinion that general rose-pruning had better be deferred ; I confess that I had not thought a return of frost such as this possible at so late a date.

The news of the great loss England has sustained makes one long to be at home. Everyone must feel thankful that the "Lamp of life" has gone out as it has, and that the Queen has not outlived her faculties, as that would have so greatly added to the grief her family and people are feeling now. In no foreign country will she be more regretted than in Italy, where she has so often been a welcome and honoured guest.

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*January 25.* Frost, succeeded by soft, April-like weather. Letter from the Absentee of quite late date, saying he has just been all round the Legation grounds, swearing at the gardeners, by way of relaxation after a particularly heavy mail. I have just been doing the same, *not* by way of relaxation. Having been so little out-of-doors there are all sorts of discoveries of small negligences, very annoying when put together, and showing how little dependence can be placed here on people unless one is *continually* on the watch.

*January 29.* At Verdi's age there could be only one termination to his illness. Italians rightly make much of their great men, and the papers here came out with mourning borders, and are as full of their subject as the English papers are of royal news. *The Times* has made a most stupid mistake, and one that one hundred years hence may puzzle students who refer to it for small details of more or less historical interest. In their biography of the Queen, given in the issue of the twenty-third instant, it refers to her first visit to Florence as having occurred in the spring of 1888 — and then, on the following page, mentions her first visit here, when she spent such delightful weeks at Villa Palmieri, as having been made in 1893. This, of course, should have been entered as her second visit; it was during this last that Her Majesty came up to tea with our landlord, and conceived the idea of securing his place for her third visit in the following spring (1894), failing in which plan she had to content herself with the Villa Fabbricotti.

Yesterday was one of those delightful, warm, still

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days that so often presage a storm. The barometer has dropped heavily, and to-day a furious gale is blowing up from the south, rain beating against the windows. As our house-cistern is absolutely empty, we are rejoicing over the downpour. One bud on the old red camelia tree is showing colour, and if we have the usual fine fortnight in February, vegetation will advance rapidly.

*January 31.* Paying a visit to-day in an Italian house the conversation naturally turned on Verdi, and a gentleman informed me that he looked on him as the greatest genius of the age, both intellectually and morally. This quite illustrates the Tuscan inability to discern gradations; they are possessed by the demon of exaggeration to a quite extraordinary degree: nothing is ever in its true position; with them it must always be the all in all, *splendido, stupendo*, and so forth, and one gets so sick of these exaggerations.

Changing a book at the library this afternoon, a stout female beside me said, "Ah, and besides that, I want a novel called 'The Garden that I Love,' I don't know who it is by." I, on one side, murmured gently the sacred syllables, and the librarian on the other, deeply scandalised, corrected her ideas. Such is fame!

*February 2.* To-day all our thoughts have been in England; amid all the regret one feels so strongly how much more sad it would have been if the reign had been one for which *no* regret could have been felt, instead of being, as it has been, a supreme glory to the land. Lord Curzon spoke well to Lumsden's Corps on their return from South Africa, when he

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referred to the "greatest thing on earth, the honour of the British name." And no one has done more to make that name held in honour than the Queen who has gone from us.

The weather continues to set all previous experience, and all prognostications, at defiance; hail, thunder, torrents of rain, and bitter cold continue to be our portion; the Roman hyacinths, which, in an ordinary way, are making the court-yard fragrant by the first of January, are not yet in flower. Flowers in the florists' shops cost more than in London, and snowdrops are our only show.

The question whether medical men practising in this country shall be obliged to take the Italian degree has again come to the front, and in a very acute form. Visconte Venosta has vainly endeavored to rule that the prohibition to practise without this degree shall not be retrospective, and Italian feeling on the subject appears to be very bitter. Outsiders will say, why trouble about such a simple matter, and why should not the English doctors take the Italian degree? But those who argue in this way do not comprehend the "ways" of this country, which are intricate. There is no law that cannot be evaded here, and once this law was passed, care would be taken that those degrees should *not* be obtainable by Englishmen. Very short-sighted policy for a country that lives so entirely by, and on, the foreigner as Italy does, for English people will neither travel nor settle where they cannot have the services of their own doctors, so that this movement on the part of the

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Italian doctors (which is entirely dictated by jealousy of their detested rivals), will, if successful, speedily kill that golden goose, the British tourist, and still more the American goose, which is apt to be the more profitable bird of the two; for travelling Americans rarely speak any language but their own, and would therefore find more difficulty than the English goose, who would probably be able to fall back on French as a medium of conversation. And this they, the Italian doctors, will certainly discover to their cost and "come to repentance," as an Arab dealer in the Cairo bazaars once told me I would, if I did not purchase a certain pair of bracelets for which he asked a rather long price.

*February 5.* Rain, rain, and yet more rain, sufficient in fact to extinguish more conflagrations than Saint Agatha, patron saint of Catania and of Malta, and special protectress against fire, ever could have dealt with. To-day she is commemorated in Tuscany in a very curious way. The legend runs that, after her death in the third century, during a terrible eruption of Mount Etna, the Catanians took refuge near her tomb, from which they took her veil, and, placing it on a tower as a banner, they walked in procession to meet the stream of fire, which at once turned aside from their city, and the eruption ceased. To-day outside the fire insurance offices, and in many other places, are to be seen little crosses made of wax. I do not know why this material should have been chosen for their manufacture, but there is probably a meaning in the selection.

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February 6. The weather having made an effort at clearing, we were able to drive into town to visit the Oratory of the Confraternity of the Christian Doctrine, called the "Vanchettoni,"—translated literally, "to go in silence"; — they were bound to walk in silence in the church processions, hence the name. There are a great many of these confraternities, guilds or brotherhoods, as we should say, throughout Tuscany; they are totally apart from the monastic orders, being composed of laymen bound more or less to a certain amount of good works. The particular charity of this one is a supper given to one hundred poor persons on Founder's Day, which, this year, fell on the Wednesday before Sexagesima Sunday. The large vestibule of the Oratory was filled with tables, covered with linen cloths, and piled up with dishes containing provisions of a quite tempting description, and tastefully garnished. Passing through this vestibule into the body of the church, a long college-like chamber in which the feast was to be partaken of, we found two long rows of tables prepared for the expected guests — eight tables on either side — and, between these, were smaller tables, well furnished with bottles of wine and carafes of water, and below each of these small tables was a beautiful old brass dish and ewer for water. These were large enough to suggest foot-baths, but the ceremony of the washing of feet does not enter into this function. An altar at the end of the room was set out with silver plate and liberally furnished with wax candles, as were also the sixteen tables at which the guests were to seat

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themselves. Behind these were a row of small boys in linen aprons waiting to assist in serving the viands, and everything was arranged with the utmost taste and nicety. The archbishop, with many other notabilities, was to assist at the feast, and, before the guests departed, each was to receive a small money donation, so that it must have been a red-letter day in the calendar of these poor people. There are two marble heads of our Lord and Saint John in this Oratory, attributed to Donatello, but more probably by Rossellino.

*February 7.* It is curious how often one is ignorant of things just under his nose, so to say ; but, not being a truffle dog, I had no idea till yesterday that a particular kind of white truffle was to be found on this property. Having an errand at a neighbouring garden, where I knew fine stems of black bamboos were on sale, I fell in with a countryman with two very mongrel-looking dogs, and, on my asking him where he and they were bound for, he pulled out a handful of truffles and announced that they had been unearthed for him by the dogs in my landlord's fields ! Truffle dogs abound in Belgium, and most curious pig-like animals they are, but I had never seen one of these in Italy. The best black truffles come from Norcia, and in Florence they fetch as much as eighteen lire the kilo. One spring we halted at Spoleto on our return from Rome, and, finding these delicacies selling about the streets in baskets, we laid in a stock of them for ourselves and our friends at home that was highly appreciated.

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*February 10.* To-day a clear bright sun reveals all the lower Apennines thickly covered with snow. Eugenio selected this favourable moment *not* to cover frames and windows with the thick mattings so liberally provided for that purpose by his padrona. That gives one a pleasant idea how things would be done if I were absent from home. It was mere chance that I spied the unprotected glass, and at once despatched him to unfasten and let down the mattings. This is a truly Tuscan proceeding; trouble will be taken to *far figura* (make a show), and it is good to have a padrona who spends to *far figura*, but that they should do other than *far signore*, i. e., lead the life of a gentleman, which according to their standard consists in doing nothing, is very annoying to them. A Tuscan would quite endorse the celebrated counsel offered to Sir Alma Tadema when he received his title, "that he should henceforth give up his painting and live like a gentleman."

*February 12.* Yesterday was a day that made amends for much,—clear and bright, and with a sun that really had some warmth in it. I took advantage of it to pay a visit to the "Scuola di Pomologia ed Orticoltura," in search of some new shrubs which I had seen mentioned in the English gardening papers. The clever and intelligent young superintendent entered warmly into my disappointment at finding none of them obtainable, saying he knew how tiresome it was for Inglesi to go on always with the old stock things, but that with so little local demand what could they do? This place is remarkably well kept, and several

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beds were filled with coloured kales which make such a good show in winter. Signor Ricenti took me into his orchid houses where the hanging baskets of ceologyne cristata, and my old friends the Philippine Islands phalaenopsis, were a dream of beauty, with many other good things (notably some cypripediums of their own raising), and where the general order and neatness were a treat one does not often have the chance of seeing. Signor Ricenti kept cutting one choice spray after another, and presented them to me with a grace and a kindness that really added to the pleasure of the flowers, and, as the Junior Partner, who was off on a day expedition, returned with a splendid haul of early pink anemones, we were quite set up in flowers.

*February 12.* Back to frost and snow; and news comes from the Veneto that it has snowed there for eight consecutive days, and that at Vicenza the snow is two metres deep. We have had Mr. Augustus Hare's three new volumes of his autobiography from the library — the librarian nearly collapsed when I informed him of this further publication. "You don't mean to tell me, Madame, that there are three *more* volumes of Mr. Hare's life?" They are amusing in a way, rather absurd, and one is irresistibly reminded of the Macaulay dictum, apropos of a much bigger man, "the soul of a gentleman usher!" Here and there are things to be noted. He gives excellent advice to people coming out to this country, to take up a pursuit and have an interest in something. I remember how irritating it used to be in Rome to hear English wintering there

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speak as if the fox hunting in the Campagna was the *raison d'être* of their Roman winter. I am amused at the way Mr. Hare speaks of seeing things "with intention," and of the difference it makes. Never having seen things *without* intention, the expression rather strikes one; but, when one comes to think of it, a great many people do travel about without any particular end or aim. Mr. Hare's books are *anathema maranatha* to the Junior Partner, who has a rooted aversion to early rising, and who resents the many early starts necessitated by my desire to see places of interest specially indicated by him. I wish he would condescend to more Baedeker-like exactness and less poetry in some of his description.

Some years ago, when we were making a tour in the Marsica and among the Hernican mountains, I engaged a *vetturino* to drive us from Sora to Alatri, taking the monastery of Casamara *en route*, and driving the following day from Alatri to Trisulti. The man looked doubtful, and said he would engage to drive wherever there was a road, but he was certain there was none that was *carrozzabile* between Alatri and Trisulti. I pinned my faith on Mr. Hare's somewhat loosely-worded description, but the *vetturino* was right, and the road only went a very little way beyond Collopardi. I could not ride on a native saddle, and sooner than relinquish the visit to Trisulti we walked there and back, descending to see the Grotto of Collopardi as we returned, and then driving to Frosinone, where we spent the night. I was half led, half carried up the steep ascent in returning from the grotto part

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of the business, and was obliged to have some brandy ; and the Junior Partner has never forgotten or forgiven Mr. Hare that trip — into which I will allow there was perhaps too much intention put.

It is a pity Mr. Hare should persist in speaking as he does of the "Sardinian occupation" having spoilt Rome ; the house of Savoy reigns and rules in Rome by the will of the Italian people. I quite realize the loss of much that was picturesque and delightful in the old Papal days, but what has spoilt Rome much more than the change of government has been caused by the frenzied "making haste to be rich" of these old Roman "Papalini" families, the "Neri" for whom Mr. Hare cherishes such an admiration ; and the amusement caused by his universal cousinhood is not surprising. No kind of adoption can entitle people to claim as cousins the children of their father's brother's wife's sister, and that is what his claim to kindred with "Arthur Stanley" resolves itself into. Mr. Hare is curiously un-English, and probably the very composite character of his family tree has produced in him the many contradictory traits that make up his somewhat cranky and most egotistical personality.

When I was last in London, I was deep in the selection of some books at Mudie's one dusky November afternoon, when a queer little old man appeared on a similar errand. He was very well groomed, and if not recalling an "oiled and curled Assyrian bull," rather suggested an elderly Arthur Pendennis. Hearing something said about "Old Chester," I asked the in-

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telligent assistant, after the old man had gone, what the book in question was, thinking it might be of some archæological interest. It was only a stupid story book, as to the binding of which particular instructions had been given. "That gentleman, Madam," said the attendant, "was Mr. Augustus Hare!" The young Augustus! To be sure, more than thirty years had passed since the old Roman days, and it is doubtless good for us all to realize the ravages time's changes make in our own persons, when we look at the wrecks of our neighbours.

*February 14.* This is *Berlingaccio*, the last Thursday of carnival. An Italian friend thus explains this curious word :

"There are many secular and religious festivals which the lower orders remember by some sweet or savory *plat* usually eaten on that day :— thus, macaroni is associated with San Lorenzo, fritters with San Giuseppe, and rolls that have been blessed with Sant' Antonio ;— in the same way lamb is eaten at Easter. The same holds good of the *berlingaccio*, a corruption of *berlingozzo*, the name of a particular kind of *ciambelli* (fried ring, made of light dough or batter), eaten on the day which is now called *giovedi grasso*. Indeed, the word *berlingozzo* comes from the verb *berlingare*, which describes the behaviour of a person who, having eaten and drunk to repletion, discourses and chatters ; but this verb is no longer in use.

Carnival this year probably will not be kept at all owing to the king's death, but, apart from that, the temperature would indispose people for any out-of-

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door merriment. The frost is intense ; had it occurred in December it would not have been strange, but so low a temperature is unprecedented : there is snow on all the neighboring hills and an icy wind blowing the dust up in clouds. Rome is cursed with the same weather, and in Naples it is still worse, Vesuvius, although in eruption, being covered with snow. Eugenio informed me with great hilarity that "even those others with hot-houses had this winter lost all their plants." This I take to be a pleasant way of preparing my mind to hear that the best part of the plants in the unprotected open are dead.

Every one has his stock of chrysanthemums frozen, so no cuttings can be taken. Jack walks in, looks round the room, gazes at the lowest chair nearest the fire, and intimates plainly that he is waiting to see it occupied, and a lap made for him. I am almost thankful my dear birds are not here to feel the cold ; the rooms are warm enough during the day, but there is no banking up a wood fire at night and they would have felt the cold terribly.

*February 19.* Yesterday was spent in making out the list of seeds for spring sowings ; hitherto this has been sent to a celebrated French firm of seedsmen in Paris, but last year they gave me so much trouble by their mistakes, delays, sold-out-ness, and unfulfilled promises of sending later on, that I am ordering this year from Herr Ernst Benary of Erfurt, whom I have heard called "the greatest seedsman in the world." He certainly is one of the most intelligent and obliging, and pays as much attention to my small require-

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ments as if I were a South African millionaire with a passion for flowers. His catalogue, too, has the very great advantage for small gardens of having even the best seeds in quite tiny cheap packets, thus enabling those who wish for a great variety to indulge their fancies without much expense.

*February 24.* The papers are full of disasters from every part of the country. A letter from a friend newly arrived in Rome says: "This is awful; England was nothing to it." The weather has surpassed itself; it has snowed for twenty-four hours, and the sky is full of storm-clouds suggestive of untold reserves of snow yet to come. A little white turtle-dove was found dead in one of the cages this evening; it was well and thriving in the morning, and I think the mother must have neglected to feed it, as their dwelling-place is warm enough.

Jack is becoming a perfect tyrant; he whimpers continually and expects us to know exactly what ails him; he is also afflicted with a cough, and very little "noctambulating" contents him. I do not know if it is Mr. le Strange himself, or his sympathetic critic and reviewer in the *Spectator*, who has enriched the English language with this delightfully expressive word, so specially adapted to describe the ways of catdom.

Jack has no foolish altruistic feelings, and when he hears the plaints of his brethren, the strays, in the court-yard, he just lifts his head for an instant and then tucks his paws more firmly over it and his hot bottle, the scarlet cover of which is most becoming to him.

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Dr. Furnival's speech at his commemoration dinner is delightfully characteristic of his genial, kindly nature. We used to see a great deal of him in the educational days of the Junior Partner, who was a special favourite of his — when Shakespeare readings in the garden would be followed by cheerful supper parties.

A young relative of mine in London was looking out in those days for bachelor chambers in a block of flats. The secretary of the company to whom they belonged intimated that the testimony of two householders as to his rent-paying capacity would be required. The applicant gave my name as one and Dr. Furnival's for the other. The company naturally preferred to take up the *male* reference, and Dr. Furnival's reply, after a glowing panegyric on the merits of the applicant, wound up by congratulating the company on getting as a tenant a man who "was not only a gentleman and a thorough good fellow, but a member of the Browning Society." The company's manager must have been rather struck by this view of a tenant's qualifications.

*March 1.* We begin to have hopes of spring, notwithstanding the idea that prevails here, as in England, that *marzo è pazzo* (March is mad).

The last few days there has been brilliant sunshine; Jack rolls about the court-yard in ecstasy at again feeling some warmth, and the birds have started preliminary twitterings; best of all, one can now have windows opened at night sufficiently to admit freely the blessed fresh air which possesses every quality of soothing. But the poor garden remains a brown and

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frozen mass of inert dead-looking matter ; generally at this season the borders are blue with violets ; this year there is not even a fresh green leaf on them. We are afraid to water, as the frost has returned these last few nights.

It is not often that we are tempted out at night by any entertainment that Florence has to offer, but the other night we did take the trouble to go and hear the young Polish violinist, Kubelik, and felt ourselves repaid. He is not yet twenty-one, a rather pathetic, childish-looking figure of imperturbable gravity, not the vestige of a smile on his face, nor of any expression of satisfaction at the liberal applause which greeted his playing, or at the various floral tributes offered for his acceptance. He played among other enchanting things, Ernst's *Elegie*, which carried one back to very old times.—Kubelik has the real violin hand and probably has a future before him. The English papers have many sympathetic references to the death of poor little Mr. Haweis, himself, as Hullah used to say, "no mean performer." Years ago we saw a good deal of Mr. Haweis in the Welbeck Street time, before the blossoming out into the glories of Queen's House, Chelsea, and what the London servant calls "staying company." One night as we were driving home from one of the "reunions" of the zoological garden type, to which the Haweises were addicted, the head of the family, who had been much tried by the variety of fellow creatures presented that evening for his acquaintance, said severely, as he lit his cigarette : "These people are just like sparrows," when the voice of the Junior Partner — then so young



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a person that she had no business at all with such gatherings — was heard from her back seat corner: “Yes, like Hans Andersen’s three sparrows who curt-sied on the left leg, and said, ‘Peep, peep’ to each other.”

The Italians are greatly struck and humiliated by the mourning worn by the English community here for the Queen, and begin, I think, to grasp how remiss they were in this respect on the occasion of King Humbert’s death. Apropos of mourning, we hear of a negro who applied at a stationery store in New York for cards with “flesh-coloured” borders. The Absentee writes that in Persia the natives are anxious to know if the Queen died of poison, and if it has yet been discovered whether the Prince of Wales administered it with his own hand or by deputy. No doubt this truly Oriental idea prevails in many other countries.

The Absentee, having manfully done his duty in the social line, begins to realize the blissful prospect of “functions” in the official world being suspended for some time to come. Some one here, speaking of a solitary resident, said, “If she feels dull of an evening she can always run along to the So-and-So’s.” What a treat for the latter to have their quiet, leisure evening hours infringed upon,—the time when our books, papers and magazines, come out, and Jackie is the only welcome intruder!

*March 3.* “A blessed and a gracious rain,” as an old college don once said to a weather grumbler. In our own house I once heard the host, with the ex-

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quisite courtesy which made him appear at his very best at home, apologize to a departing guest for the weather, which he regretted had so interfered with her enjoyment during her visit. She looked at him reprovingly, and said, "I never complain of the weather; we're in *higher hands*." If she had ever experienced such a winter as we have passed through in Tuscany, she might have referred it to *lower hands*, for the cold has been diabolical; but a day of soft, genial rain, such as this, is twice blessed; for, apart from its service to garden and cisterns, it also makes social interruptions in the highest degree improbable, and one can count on a clear unbroken stretch of time.

Yesterday I found that Eugenio had actually, on his own initiative, given the grass a good dressing of wood-ash and soot, which the rain will have washed in.

*March 5.* Talk of the variable English climate: it is nowhere in comparison with this beloved Tuscany; during the night, between Sunday and yesterday, thunder pealing with cracks of doom, rain, hail, and intense cold. In the morning of yesterday a temperature so warm and summer-like that I prepared for an outing, the first for three weeks; by five P.M. a bitter wind, making us thankful to close the carriage windows in driving home; at night, hard frost, leaving the ground white at eight A.M.; so cold this forenoon that one was glad to resume winter wraps, and now (three P.M.), sunshine streaming in, and, where I write, the thermometer marking seventy degrees. This is a specimen

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of the variations to which body and bones are required to accommodate themselves. The sun is working his spring miracles. Yesterday one streak of yellow crocuses was visible ; to-day a whole row is in flower — and the pyramid of yellow winter jasmine is a starry constellation ; better than either are the first green shoots on the climbing roses, and in the azalea bed I can see from my window the daphne in flower. Our expedition yesterday was to Signor Cantagalli's showrooms, to see the beautiful and artistic decorations he has in hand for the "Casa di risparmio" of Pistoia ; some of these terra-cotta works were finished and glazed ; others as yet unglazed, but of the merits of which one could perfectly well judge. Signor Cantagalli's copies of the old glazed della Robbia ware are well known, but I have not before seen any original designs in his showrooms that pleased me so much as one of these Pistoian decorations — a shield-shaped boss with a Virgin and child in the centre. I took its number with a view to a possible replica. We were glad to find our own special attendant returned from the Paris exposition, — he knows just what we like, and one does not lose time over things of no interest. It is to him, I believe, that the firm owes the idea of reproducing a pure white glaze, copied from some old faïence in the museum at Tours. We possessed ourselves of a very large terra-cotta pot baked in a paler tint than is usual, the design also a copy of a vase of the French Renaissance period, in the Tours museum. This piece was destined to be covered with a white glaze, but we much preferred it in its native undress condition, and

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ordered it home at once to receive the largest of our variegated aloes. Of all the beautiful objects in this white glaze shown to us yesterday, the copies of the plaques in low relief, with here and there a touch of gold, that are in the great Malatesta Church at Rimini, pleased us most.

About three years ago, Signor Cantagalli revived an old *sgraffitto* pottery, recalling specimens of the rude and early Montelupo ware, most artistic both in shape and colouring. These were first shown at the Turin Exhibition of 1898. This winter Signor Cantagalli is travelling in Egypt, and is sure to bring back from that ancient country new ideas for his beautiful art.<sup>1</sup>

From this delightful and instructive visit we passed to one of the oldest and best of the private gardens belonging to a leading Florentine family. Although the owners occupy their villa, which stands within the grounds, they have nothing to do with the garden, which has for many years past been leased out to one of the best and most intelligent of the first-class Tuscan gardeners. To my great joy, I found here a plant of Edvortzia crisantha, one of the daphne tribe, which some years ago I had had under the name of "Daphne Edgeworthi," but which we had lost for some reason connected with faulty grafting. I believe it is a Himalayan plant; the flowers come out before the leaves in the end of January (when things are doubly precious) and resemble miniature heads of cowslips at the end of each stem. As the day following was also fine I availed

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Cantagalli died in Egypt a few weeks after this.

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myself of it to visit the botanical gardens, and one or two others. It is sad to see everywhere the damage done by this terrific winter — friends who had fled to Rome and elsewhere are returning sadder and wiser people — and there is but one verdict, "weather much worse than here." That does not seem possible, but of course in draughty hotels every discomfort is aggravated, and it always appears to me the height of folly to turn out of one's own comfortable warm house in such a winter as this ; at home, fires, food, everything, can be regulated to suit one's own taste, and ensure the maximum of comfort ; but *en voyage* you have no control, a *certain discomfort* in cold railway stations and unheated carriages, and a very doubtful prospect of finding better weather at so short a distance from this as even Sicily is.

After the delusive hopes raised by these few spring-like days, it was a shock to find, on awaking yesterday morning, Monte Morello white with snow, *cold* rain falling in torrents, and our old, faithful friend, the *tramontana*, in full swing.

The minor inconveniences that failure of sunshine causes here can hardly be realized in a northern country. The cold has upset all calculations of provision of fuel ; our wood merchant lives at a great distance, and his stock is low. *Forme* are sold out, and in this weather none can be made, because there is no sun-heat to dry them. A pair of large strawberry *orcie* or jars ordered months ago cannot be fired in the kiln for the same reason, viz., that they must first be sun-dried. Wine, for which we have been waiting for weeks, cannot be

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brought without the risk of its spoiling hopelessly *en route*, and to have some four or five barrels of good wine spoilt would be no joke. The seeds which have arrived would in an ordinary season be sown at once, but in this temperature it would be useless to venture them, so altogether it is a case for *pazienza* — much used and abused word.

*March 11.* Another tremendous gale got up in the night of the ninth, and raged during the whole of yesterday. So threatening was the sky that Eugenio, who had started to spend his Sunday leisure with his family, returned at once to make all mattings on windows and frames secure. By night the court-yard was strewn with leaves and sticks broken off the trees by the fury of the gale. This morning, seeing him engaged on the unwonted task of washing the wooden gate, I enquired the reason, and was told that during the night a fine dust, like brickdust, had fallen from the heavens, along with the rain, and bespattered everything, frames, pots, flowers, etc.! I sniffed at the idea of this celestial descent, considering the general *débris* amply accounted for by the force of the gale, but I was aware that it must have been of an unusual kind to have produced this effort at cleanliness off Eugenio's own bat. He had cheered the heart of my Scotch handmaiden by the assurance that the war in South Africa would now soon be concluded, as five hundred Italian soldiers had been despatched there to assist the British troops in their desperate straits. As the young person's own particular "reservist" was there, engaged in fighting his country's battles, it may be



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imagined with what scorn this intelligence was received.

Rain is again falling in torrents, but the temperature is distinctly higher, and a good washing will be of great benefit to the poor garden. It certainly requires what Roman Catholics call "great acts of faith" to believe in its ever recovering this winter. The project of a raid among the antiquarios' shops in Florence will have to be abandoned. The Junior Partner returned last Saturday from one of these in a most self-satisfied frame of mind, having unearthed some very desirable old Leeds plates. A few years ago there was an extraordinary amount of this ware, as well as of its cousin, Wedgwood, to be picked up in Tuscany. I do not clearly understand how so much of it ever found its way here,—more than can be accounted for even on the supposition that every English settler had selected his household crockery of it. The Aldrovandi factory copied both Leeds and Wedgwood, and their work is known here under the generic term of "Philadelphia." This latter name is a mystery of which I have not been able to trace the origin. But these Italian copies are easily distinguished from the originals, from which they differ unmistakably in glaze, texture, and, above all, in weight, and are coarse and clumsy when compared with their exquisitely dainty English prototypes.

There is a legend that a brother of the original Wedgwood lived at Leghorn, and that large consignments of ware were sent out to him, but I do not know if this story has any foundation in fact.

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*Three hours later.* It is fortunate that neither by word nor gesture did I betray this morning to Eugenio my utter contempt of his explanation of the "celestial phenomena" he had observed in the court-yard; had I done so, the superior position in which he would have found himself would have rendered him insufferable.

When the post arrived the Italian papers contained several paragraphs referring to the remarkable phenomenon of what they call the "pioggia di sangue" so curious and interesting that I transcribe the substance of them here:

"*Palermo, March 10.* All this morning an immense reddish-coloured cloud has hung over the city, the sky is alarmingly red, a suffocating sirocco is blowing, the drops of rain that have fallen look like coagulated blood;—this phenomenon, known as 'rain of blood,' is attributed to sand of the deserts of Africa brought over by the wind: the same thing has been observed all over the island. 6.40 P. M.: yesterday's phenomenon, due to the 'Khamsin' of the desert, has made a deep impression on the lower orders of the people; the day continues horribly sultry."

The paper continues with the same kind of report, headed "The Phenomenon in Rome" and "The Panic in Naples," and after describing the aspect of both cities, remarks of the latter:

"The panic-stricken population has taken refuge in the churches, the sacrament has been exposed. The Meteorological Observatory notes a great depression in the south, produced, no doubt, by the increase of

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south winds ; at five-twenty the phenomenon of the 'Fata Morgana' was seen ; the sky is coloured a deep red."

There are similar accounts from Avellino and Castrovildari, and many other towns in the South.

Thanks to Eugenio's unwonted energy our portion of this red sand was all "redd up" before I left my room, but I have seen some of it, saved from friends' gardens, and it is precisely like the sand of Abou-Simbel, a bottleful of which I have among my souvenirs of a winter up the Nile, in Egypt and Nubia. But I never before heard of a Khamsin wind carrying desert sand in this way over Italy, and every one to whom I have spoken on the subject says the same. In the superstitious south such an event is sure to be taken as a portent of evil, and it is to be hoped that no attempt will be made to connect it with the expected event at the Quirinal. The papers of the same date contain some really quite interesting reflections, apropos of the disgraceful behaviour of the Irish members in the House of Commons, contrasting the feeling in Italy, after scenes at Montecitorio, much more scandalous than those which have recently taken place in the House of Commons, with the feeling in England, and condemning those who, by objecting to even the mildest measures for the repression of such disorders, "would lead their country to perdition and institute a new tyranny, destructive of all liberty."

Bravo! This is striking the right note, and one too rarely heard in this part.

*March 18.* Spring has been distinctly in the air

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these last few days, the Banksia roses and the honeysuckle have a veil of soft, misty yellow green thrown over them, and all through the fields, in the *podere*, patches of early fruit blossom are gleaming among the green and grey of the olive trees. Friends and neighbours begin to creep about out-of-doors and interview each other, and the general verdict is that everyone has added on ten years to their age from the effects of this cruel winter, which has confined most of us to barracks.

But the cold has abated at last, and the "pig" is ordered into retirement till another winter, as the cheerful wood-fire on the open hearth will now suffice during the few weeks that may still remain of cold weather. The poor crocuses have been much subdued by the rain which continues to fall in torrents. — I never quarrel with rain here, however, not even when, as to-day, it lies in pools on beds where early bulbs are planted. There may be more of it than is just requisite at one particular time, but if we cannot have it better regulated it is always something to have the ground so thoroughly soaked that it will remain moist at two feet below the surface during the torrid heats of May and June. But it is sad to see so much good water running to waste instead of being stored, as it should be, in cisterns larger than ours.

The fat blackbirds are having a good time on the grass walk, the bees have been busy on the daphne flowers, and the butterflies are hovering round,—all hopeful signs of spring. Eugenio, sick of being appealed to on the subject of the weather, takes refuge in the time-honoured formula, "Chi lo sa?"

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*March 19.* Another drop in the aneroid of about an inch; the Arno is in flood, and the great plain that stretches out in the distant background of our view is like a large lake gleaming in the grey, misty light cast by the storm-clouds athwart the landscape. Thus is our hope of spring realized in the "Sunny South."

*March 21.* Two nights ago fears were entertained for the safety of the Ponte Vecchio; the Arno has only once exceeded its present height. Yesterday we drove into town to look at it from the bridges. I have never before seen it such a swirling, lashing mass of tawny, yellow, foaming water; all the little boats that usually lie down at the river's edge have been removed for safety to the pavements above its banks. The papers contain nothing but reports of disasters from all parts of Italy, and landslips have occurred at several points along the Genoa railway line. The sky is grey and gloomy, and still swept by angry storm-clouds, and a bitter wind is blowing. One cannot imagine how vegetation survives, but in the woods are quantities of blue hepaticas, and the Junior Partner brought in a basketful of the little green and black iris, which looks as if dotted with black velvet, and are called here "Bella Vedova" (beautiful widow). In the garden the white camelias have joined the old red one in breaking into flower, and this morning four large bunches of dark blue violets were picked and brought in to perfume all the house. The daffodils and iris stylosa are coming into flower. There has not been a ray of sun for several days, and nothing but flowers

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would, as Tuscans say, *render conto* in this way ; they seem to bend their backs to the smiter, and return good for evil in a most Christian and forgiving spirit. This evening the outlook over our beautiful view is of the atmospheric effect of an English manufacturing district, a tint of dense, cold grey pervades the sky, and the young shoots of my beloved Niphетос are quivering as if they felt their cruel ill-usage.

*March 24.* The cold is again intense, and would have been remarkable in an ordinary December, but coming now, at the end of March, and after the winter we have had, it is past bearing with patience. We hear of a village near Ventimiglia where it has snowed for six days without ceasing, and of another, nearer home, in the Val di Nievole, where two hundred families are surrounded by water, owing to the inundations of the Arno; and in every part of central and north Italy the weather seems to be the same as here.

*March 29.* To-day the cold is excruciating ; the big wagons, laden with wood, that pass along our road, on their way down from the north, have their tarpaulin covers thickly coated with ice, snowflakes are falling, and the air has the peculiar feeling of large reserves of snow being at no great distance. It really seems as if this winter were never to end.

## *Chapter XII*

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### *Spring in Tuscany*

#### *The Pick of the Year*

*April 7.* At last it seems as though the spring had come to stay, but up to March 31 the cold was excruciating, and gales of wind, with torrents of rain, completely frustrated all plans for outdoor enjoyment. Even now the weather is far from being settled into its usual warmth, and the forecast for April is not encouraging. But already that greatest of all miracle-workers, the sun, has changed the face of the garden in a wonderful way.

All the prunings of last autumn seem to have been successful! The great show of this week is the big *Prunus Pissardi*<sup>1</sup> at the bottom of the garden. It is a mass of pale pinky blossom, with just a suspicion of the dark brown leaves through its lower branches; the flowers above these rise into the clear air in a kind of misty effect, like the crest of a wave, and give one the effect of Japan and things Japanesey. The effect of the prunus is heightened by the pale yellow-green of a white Banksia rose, which has completely covered an old olive tree beside it. By the time this last is in flower the prunus blossom will be over, and the Banksia will be thrown into relief by its lovely brown foliage.

<sup>1</sup> *Prunus Pissardi* is now being extensively grown in Tuscany for the sake of its fruit, which is delicious,—a particularly well-flavoured and very juicy plum. I presume the fruit would ripen equally well in England, but have not heard if it is grown there for market purposes, other than the beauty of its flowers and foliage.

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Next in beauty comes a small bush of *Magnolia Soulangeana*, on the grass, on which I counted fifty-eight blooms. The stems and branches are smothered in colour. In the first bed on the left, as you enter the garden, *Magnolia Lennei* is flowering well, and a plant of the *Magnolia stellata* is in great beauty, but none approach the wealth of the fifty-eight blossoms. One hardly ever sees these magnolias in Tuscany, but I imagine they are plentiful in North Italy. The *Pyrus Japonica* are all in full flower, and the large *Forsythia viridiflora*, near the cancellino, is yellow down to its very roots. The various double fruit shrubs on the grass are showing colour, and to-day the old cherry tree in the court-yard is beginning to flower at the end of each twig. The court is full of pots and pans of hyacinths, freesias, primula obconica, and daffodils of divers kinds. Already our largest palm has been lifted into his summer position under the big old acacia tree, and to-morrow our *Acacia dealbata* will be taken out from the stanzone into the open.

But, better than any individual flowering is the whole effect, all through the garden, of the red shoots of the tea roses, and the first fresh green on all the trees and shrubs.

We are far from looking as we generally do at this date, but after such a winter, and especially after the awful month of March we have passed through, it seems a miracle to see any flowers at all. The two large beds on the grass are thickly garlanded with white *Arabis*, but the anemones in the one are not yet in flower, and in the other Shirley poppies are only pushing through

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the soil, in place of being ready to break into flower, as they ought to do ten days hence. Many things look dead beyond hope of recovery. Chief among these is the big old plant of Azorre and the Tecoma, which Eugenio, in his headstrong folly, left unprotected. Indeed, since I began to go about, the signs of neglect and incapacity that meet me everywhere are so provoking, and the answers I have received so impertinent, that I have given him notice. I am unable now to go on being head gardener, especially in winter; and there ought to be an older man, and one with more love for his plants, and a greater appreciation of their wants. Where this treasure is to be found is a problem that will be difficult of solution.

The two old fiends of gardeners of the big villa have for a whole week been cutting down trees and thinning out the shrubbery on the park side of the avenue; such a clearing has not been done in our time. The owner is absent, and I am certain that no directions have been given them; but they do exactly as they please,—probably they want fuel, and I saw sacks being filled with leaves to be despatched to Vienna or elsewhere. I rejoice at anything that gives us more air and light, and one young bay-tree which interfered greatly with the development and training of a large wistaria we planted last autumn, has been cut down in the twinkling of an eye. Last year I pleaded hard for its removal, unsuccessfully, and am certain if these men knew how much I wanted it out it would still be standing there. The reason for its removal probably is that it blocked their view of anything that might be

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going on here as they passed up and down the avenue. I ventured to suggest giving the poor shrubberies a plentiful top dressing of good soil, as not one particle of nourishment have they received in fifteen years; but such an idea was received with scorn. However, I was so thankful to see this grand clearance that I was moved to a larger Easter offering than usual. The *mancia* is the great lever in Tuscany by which all service, small or great, is worked; nothing gets done without it, and, indeed, a candidate for a situation will often reckon it as part of a salary, telling you that the latter is so much (very likely the amount has been doubled for your benefit) and that the *mancia* was so much more, in the last situation, thus counting as a right what should be given of good will and according to merit. No hesitation need ever be felt as to offering *mancia* in this country. I remember to this day the embarrassment I felt on one occasion when the secretary of the Archbishop of Ravenna, having shown us something in His Eminence's private chapel, I found myself in the position of being obliged to offer him the usual *custode's* fee; but he felt none, and pocketed it cheerfully.

At Christmas and Easter not only do your own household look for some recognition of their services, but many of your friends' servants, who are in the habit of coming to your house, and many stray outsiders put in their claim, so that though the individual sums may not be very large, they amount to a very respectable total in the year, and form a tax of which it would be most impolitic to omit payment.

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The large cage of turtle-doves has been restored to its summer station between the windows of the dining-room and just beneath my own. They were so overjoyed at finding themselves back in their old quarters that they cooed and crooned at intervals all through the first night after their return, to my own great satisfaction. They have a small bambino, with whom I trust they will continue to live in peace and amity, as the last one had to set up a separate ménage on account of paternal peckings. And a bird-loving friend has asked me to befriend a white cockatoo, Colombo by name, who has had reverses in life, and is much depressed thereby. He is of a most subdued and chastened spirit, very unlike poor Rosina, and we are trying to cheer him up a bit and wean him from an evil habit of living on hemp-seed. I hope in time he will begin to look less dejected and enjoy life.

Various foreign royalties are in Florence, and the number of tourists this Easter is reported to amount to forty thousand. I should make considerable reduction from that figure, but hotels and pensions are full, and the Easter ceremonies have been attended by crowds, particularly the Grassina procession. The dove has flown straight, so the contadini are all hopeful of a prosperous season.

*April 10.* I hoped to have gone to Santa Maria Novella on Holy Thursday, when the Tenebræ psalms are always given with good effect, and where, during the chanting of these, the curious detail of the caning of Judas takes place. Little switches are sold at the doors of this church and every one enters provided

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with one of these, and, at a certain verse in the psalms is entitled to belabour his neighbour, so that for a few seconds there is a distinct "swish" resounding through the church. So far as I know this does not prevail in any other church in Florence or in Rome, but I remember it in the Philippines, in the fifties, where the punishment meted out to the representative of Judas was so severe as to endanger life and limb.

Yesterday our often deferred expedition to the Impruneta came off on a lovely, still April day, with soft grey skies and occasional gleams of sunshine lighting up the hilly country through which it is approached. It is a long drive of ten miles from our point of departure, through scenery of a totally different character from that in our part of the country.

Nothing can be more lovely than the Tuscan landscape at this season; the olive yards are dotted with fruit trees, pink almond, and white cherry in full blossom, with here and there the deeper red of the peach just breaking into flower. In sunny corners the cherry blossom is passing over, and the tender green of the first young leaves, that succeeds it, lights up the pale grey of the olive branches. The fields are full of flowers: the early purple and scarlet anemones are nearly over, but we passed one field yesterday that was studded with pale pink ones and lemon-coloured tulips, the bank below the hedge that fenced it was thickly set with dark-blue grape hyacinths. There are more than twenty varieties of tulips to be found growing wild in this part of Tuscany, the earliest of these, a tall scarlet one with very handsome flowers, being



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generally found among the corn ; later on there is, in some places, a dainty, small, striped red and white one, and various lovely yellows, in shades varying from pale lemon to a deep orange tint, with reflex petals.

The contadini are all at work in the fields ; in this district the young vine shoots have been tied up, and they are now busy pruning the olives ; babies tumbling about on the grass add a picturesque effect to the scene, and just before arriving at the Impruneta, a plantation of Mediterranean pines, so rarely seen in this part of Tuscany, the "stone pines" of Rome, bring the Pincian landscape vividly to our recollection.

The Impruneta itself is so interesting a place that I never can understand why so few tourists seem to visit it. It is the centre of the terra-cotta manufacture, most of the handsome garden pots and oil jars used throughout this part of Tuscany being made there. Recently the potters have turned their attention more to decorative work, and beautiful and artistic pots and vases are turned out, and largely bought by wealthy American and English tourists. I was in search of a couple of these for a pair of variegated aloes that required shifting into larger quarters, and I had no difficulty in finding pots decorated to my taste. But the most beautiful specimen we saw was still unfired, and never having seen this work in process, we found it very interesting. The pot, still in the wet clay, was enveloped in a thick coating of *gesso*, and in this it was to be placed in the furnace ; the master potter obligingly removed the protecting *gesso* so as to allow of our in-

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specting the decoration of the pot, the design for which had been drawn by his son ; it, as well as its pedestal, was in low relief in sprays of foliage, and so artistic in feeling that I would gladly have purchased it; but, as the firing was calculated to take at least three weeks to complete, I had to content myself with the hope of acquiring it another time.

The Church of the Impruneta, besides its great treasure of the "Black Virgin," for which it is celebrated, and which is only exhibited on very special *feste*, and at the annual cattle fair held there in the month of October, contains some beautiful pieces of Della Robbia work, besides many interesting things in the sacristy.

The whole of the San Felice a Ema district, through which we returned, is much less overrun by foreign settlers than our part of the country, and altogether gives one more the feeling of the "Aurora Leigh" Italy of Mrs. Browning. But it is bitterly cold in winter, lying in open, hilly country, exposed to every wind that blows, and with no sheltering mountains to keep off the tramontana blast.

*April 12.* The big cherry tree in the court-yard is a perfect picture, standing still and stately, a mass of blossom, and on the grass are beautiful blossoms of double scarlet and pure white double peach, this last, I think, quite the loveliest of all the many good things of this month. *Pyrus malus floribunda* is just starting into flower, its clusters of pink buds showing among the fresh foliage. The daffodils are nearly over, so are the *Stylosa* irises, but the *Pumila* varieties are

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there to succeed the latter. The bed of early double tulips is just coming into flower, and opposite it fritillarias are raising their heads below the magnolia bushes. A week of warmth and Banksias will be in flower.

*April 14.* Alas for the glory of the spring, and the beauty of the blossom ! We are back in winter. Rain, and *cold* rain, in torrents, an inky black sky, thunder pealing, and the storm-clouds sweeping over Monte Morello ; — a howling north wind is scattering all the lovely fruit blossom ; the olives are tossing in the wind, and even the stately cypress trees are swaying to and fro. The Italian explanation would be that the March moon is still controlling the weather, the new April moon not being due till the eighteenth. No Tuscan gardener or contadino will ever sow in a waning moon, and they hold firmly to the belief that all sowings must be done during the two first quarters of the moon. This relapse into winter is really most disheartening, and we are back to fires.

*April 17.* The weather continues quite Marchy, and the combination of a hot sun and a cold wind withers up the few flowers there are in the garden. But neither shrubs nor rose-trees seem to have suffered from the terrible winter, and the latter look more promising than I remember to have seen them in any previous spring ; the flowering shrubs are quite splendid, *Spiraea salicifolia* and *Spiraea prunifolia*, the latter grown as pillar plants, are full of buds. The centre bed on the grass is filled with the old double white tulip, "La Candeur," and carpeted with *Myosotis*. This mixture is a reminiscence of the spring bedding at Clevedon in

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old days, more than thirty years ago, and would be hard to beat. Many of the double tulips are liable to have their heads nipped off by storms of rain and hail, from which, even in Tuscany, we are by no means exempt during this month, but these seem to make no impression on the steady flowering La Candeur, while the Myosotis revels in the moisture, and later on it covers the retreat of the tulips, when they at last give in, most effectively.

Fresh snow on the Pistoiese Apennines ; it is the wind blowing off these that makes the cold so piercing, but, in spite of all, both the cuckoo and the nightingale have sounded their first note.

The arum lilies are flowering in the court-yard, and the imantophyllums that were repotted last autumn make a brave show with their glossy, dark green leaves, from among which their flower spikes are already pushing up. The wistaria is just coming into flower, and to-day two Maréchal Neil buds have been picked. For the next two months the garden will go from one glory to another,—after that, drought and desperation.

I have been trying to hear of a really good and capable gardener, but without success. Eugenio continues in a most disagreeable temper, and, if I have to patch up a truce with him, he must be brought to a better understanding of his position. However, yesterday at dinner time, during a heavy storm, he rushed up to get his plants in shelter, and sang out to Irma that Jackie was waiting for the door to be opened, and these little attentions go a long way towards forgiveness on my part.



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The new moon began in *tempo sereno*, with the stars shining out in a clear sky, and so far the weather is "answering expectation"; probably the heat, much wanted, will come quite suddenly and throw every one off his balance till clothes are a little adjusted. We are amused at the groans of our English tourist friends, with their remarks about an "August sun." Yesterday some of these said that they thought they had now got through the *worst* of their sight-seeing. The thought forces itself, why leave home to encounter all the inevitable discomforts of the tourist season here, in addition to the fatigue and expense of the journey out from England, if seeing the many beautiful things that one of the loveliest cities in the world contains be looked upon as a penance, to be got through with as much thankfulness of spirit as may be? I do not myself know of anything that would induce us to come to this or any other tourist resort in Italy at Easter,—everywhere a crowd, a rush, imposition, uncomfortable quarters,—in a word, everything that goes to make up discomfort and the sense of vanity and vexation of spirit.

*April 21.* The heat my prophetic soul foresaw has come, and already three days of sun have so changed the face of the garden that it seems impossible it is just two weeks to-day since the first cherry blossom appeared. Now its flowering is over for this year, and the foliage at the first browny stage, not yet developed into green. The Judas tree behind the stanzone has a distinct rose flush through its branches and the rose-buds are swelling visibly.

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Despite the beauty both of the garden and of its matchless setting, now veiled in a faint misty light, my soul is disquieted within me at the hourly discoveries I make of carelessness and incapacity on the part of Eugenio. Gardening here is so very expensive a pursuit that I really do not know how to go on with a tool so imperfect. He does not care a scrap about things that so annoy me. When I pointed out how the beauty of the early tulip bed was marred by his careless mixing of colours, the reply was, "One requires to have patience in this life!" It was not apparent whether he or I stood most in need of this qualification. The number of dead plants I discovered this morning in the stanzone made me feel quite ill. One thinks of the trained English gardener, as I have known him, and of the results he would achieve in this climate, and the joy and pride he would feel in the display the very liberal provisions made here would enable him to make. He and I enjoyed life together; but Eugenio would greatly prefer that I did not go into the garden, for, whenever I do, it is to find something that requires rectifying. Imagine the condition of things in this country when one hesitates about parting with a servant so careless, simply because he is thoroughly honest, and because one knows that quality to be so rare that a successor might be destitute of it, and no better in other ways.

*April 26.* My researches in the gardener line have led me in these last few days into various gardens, first to see my old friend, Angiolino's former master, whom I have not seen for some years; it is rare to see in Tus-

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can a place kept as his garden is, a perfect treat to behold. He has laboured in it for thirty-five years and deserves infinite credit for its condition to-day. The old man was eloquent on the kindness shown to his wife in her last illness by his German employers, and also by the Empress Frederick (when on a visit to them), who had shown the greatest sympathy for this poor woman, dying of the same terrible malady of which she is herself the victim. The old man and I mingled our tears, so to say, over the iniquities of the present generation of young gardeners, and the grievances of their long-suffering employers.

It was a perfect April day, and the situation of this garden is so lovely that I came away quite refreshed in spirit, though wholly unsuccessful in my quest for a good "first hand." In another garden, visited with the same object, one of the best of the many good nursery gardens in and around Florence, I saw a most beautiful sight, a bed of very old-fashioned azaleas (*Indica*), white, striped lilac, and pale pink, probably sports from the old white and magenta-purple stocks used for grafting. The effect of the mass of tall bushes covered with flowers of a most delicate texture, their long sprays curving downward, was exquisite, a great contrast in their poetical colouring and habit of growth to the modern azalea "novelties." Those stiff, upright little bushes, with prim, round heads, and semi-double flowers of much more perfect form and substance, do not appeal to me as their older brethren do,—there is no poetry about *them*, the most correct little creatures imaginable! I was not surprised to hear that the nur-

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seryman had received numerous orders for plants of these old-fashioned azaleas, and that they were to be largely propagated this autumn. I came away with a splendid bunch of their long sprays, which, placed in tall glasses with branches of *Prunus Pissardi* supporting their fragile heads, made *furore* when some friends came next day to see the garden.

*April 28.* We picked the first *Niphetus* rose to-day, and the first *Susiana* iris, a magnificent bloom. These are never abundant with us, but their flowers are much larger and finer than I have ever seen them in English greenhouses ; they require a dry and sunny border, damp being fatal to them.

Our own azalea bed begins to look gay, the "mollis," from the palest yellow to deep flame colour, being in flower, and the "Indica" are showing colour in their pink and white buds. In the court-yard are two large plants of the old "Amœna" azalea ; its small purple flowers have no great beauty in themselves, but they are usually in flower much earlier than this, when other things are not so abundant, and, grown as they are here, they make handsome plants, very unlike the miserable little specimens I remember in English greenhouses at home. The wistaria is perfectly glorious, both in the court-yard and along the new *pergola*, and the air is full of its peculiar spicy scent.

In all the spring flowering, I know of no tint that has so poetical an effect as that of the faint salmon pink of the tamarisk blossom ; and ours, in the bed by the cancellino, with the laburnum for a background and the wistaria and "Fortune's yellow" roses wreathing

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in and out among them, sends a thrill through every one who looks at the picture they present.

The last two days have been thundery, with much rain and hail, and many of our fine double tulips have had their heads cut off, especially the long row of "Couleur de Vin." But the rain has washed off the dust which, for a week past, has been blowing steadily across the garden, and sadly spoiling the lovely red tea-rose shoots.

We may not have any specially fine plants, but there is hardly a corner in any part of the garden that an artist might not be glad to sketch ; it is a lovely picture throughout, and the result of the extensive cutting in the shrubbery has been to give us glimpses, here and there, of Judas trees that before were quite hidden, the effect of the colour of these among the dark ilexes and cypresses is lovely ; the Banksia roses are just coming into flower, and over the house-door *Bignonia capreolata* is showing its brown and yellow blossoms.

I see I must keep Eugenio for the present, careless and provoking as he is. I cannot make him understand that such work as thinning out Shirley poppies, staking sweet peas, pegging down edgings, disbudding superfluous roses, etc., if deferred too long, is useless, and that tea-roses that are left with ivy and other "foreign bodies" eating into their roots will not prove a success, and that everything delayed beyond the right moment takes twice as long to do. Neither our cannas nor dahlias are yet planted out, and quantities of seedlings await pricking out. This year much of the

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work usually done in March has been deferred, owing to the intense cold, so that there is allowance to be made for things being behind; but what is so trying is that nothing is done thoroughly when he is about it, and when one has to go back on everything, and rectify the effects of carelessness, other work that presses suffers in consequence. Apart from non-results in the garden, it is impossible to get on with one's own occupations when continually having to go and superintend things there. At this busy tourist season, social functions and attending to the wants and pleasures of friends and guests cannot be altogether ignored, and I hardly get time to read the papers, let alone a book.

One begins to comprehend how the *laissez aller* principle has developed in the Anglo-Italian mind to the extent it has: people shrug their shoulders, and say *che vuole?* Life is too short to be frayed to bits by insistence on the most elementary copy-book rules of attending to small details, and not giving disrespectful answers.

The first of May is at hand, and with so much lawlessness in the air we may be thankful if we escape a big Socialist disturbance.

*May 12.* The month has opened badly so far as gardening matters are concerned. On the night of the thirtieth of April we had a terrific thunderstorm, with torrents of rain, and hail in large lumps; the latter cut the blooms of our arum lilies into strips and tore the leaves of many of our foliage plants. This agreeable kind of weather has continued with more or less severity ever since. Fires and winter clothes are

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the order of the day; so are grey skies and constant downpours of cold rain, not genial spring showers. Let any one imagine what it would be to see the whole contents of a large greenhouse or conservatory turned out in the open, and exposed to the rigours of an English March, and they will have an idea of my feelings as I survey the treasures of the court-yard. Clevias in splendid bloom, Ixia croccata, arum lilies, yellow marguerites, pansies, cinerarias, foliage plants — and a really show selection of azaleas; on the walls the Niphетос and Maréchal Niel roses, and the espalier fence that divides the court from the garden proper one sheet of "Fortune's Yellow" roses, or, as the poetical Tuscan rendering is, the *Arancia incarnata*. All these and many other lovely things are braving the elements as best they can. In the garden proper, Spiraea prunifolia and Weigelia rosea are bending beneath their weight of blossom, and Darwin tulips are still lingering. The wistaria is now only a faded remnant of its former beauty, but Banksias make the air fragrant, the laburnums still form a golden halo in the cancellino bed, and the irises and the border roses are just coming into bloom. Of the former there is a sad misfortune to chronicle. In the last days of April, Eugenio, endeavouring to administer consolation to my dejected spirit, remarked that in a few days there would be irises in plenty to bring indoors. A few days after the visitation of hail I noticed many of the buds hanging down in a broken-necked fashion. I picked some and carried them to him, enquiring if he thought the hail had struck them. "No," he replied, "it was not the

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hail, it was a *malattia* (disease)," and opening one he disclosed to my horrified sight several large worms crawling through it. He had been aware of this calamity for several days, but had seen no necessity for informing me, his lawful padrona, of it. Never in all my Tuscan gardening years have I seen such a thing, and I have no idea of this pest, nor of the remedy for it. I have tried in various directions to get information about it, but so far without success. It has this year appeared in many other gardens, and, in some, these creatures have attacked the roses also ; roses being, so to say, in the open, you may spray with compounds, or wash with soft-soap suds, but neither remedy will reach creatures tightly shut up in iris buds.

This grey and rainy English spring is keeping many things fresh and green, and the foliage of the roses is in splendid condition. Yesterday, during a really fine afternoon, a little party of ardent rosarians were scattered about the garden, and much comparing of notes and discussions as to names went on. I regret to say I got little sympathy from my friends on the demerits of Eugenio ; they laugh especially at the idea of getting a Tuscan gardener so imbued with a love of his *mestiero* (profession) that he will work without supervision, and they suggest that when I have found this treasure I should let them know, in case he may have a brother or a cousin in want of employment. It is fortunate that the individual in question does not understand English, for if he grasped the meaning of all the expressions of admiration lavished

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on our beds and borders by the shoals of people who have been here these last ten days, his self-satisfaction would be intolerable. "And does one man do all this?" is the usual wind-up query — and, indeed, I myself felt yesterday, as I looked at the lovely flowers, how unreasonable my complaints must appear. But then, no one but myself knows what a line upon line business it is: "Snip this, cut that into shape, get out that dead wood, put those stakes in more firmly, and tie back the young shoots. — Please fill up these pots with good stuff. — The roses at the lower fence are too shaded by the overhanging branches of the early spring-flowering shrubs, they will do no good unless you cut away some branches," — and *so on*, a whole round of trifles that your English gardener would have eyes to see and a heart to understand the necessity of attending to, without any prompting from his employer. At present Eugenio is slowly emerging from his recent relapse into the savagery of native ways, but he still has only two formulas in reply to the questions "Where is such and such a plant?" and "Why is that not done?" The answer to the first is "È andata male (it is dead)," and to the second, "È passata dalla mia memoria (I forgot it)."

On the eighth we made a little excursion to Antella, a hamlet lying a few miles to the east of Florence, on a height between the Grassina and the Bagno a' Ripoli roads. Jane Clairmont is buried in the little church-yard of Antella, but the chief interest of the district is the villa of the old family of Peruzzi,<sup>1</sup> famous in the

<sup>1</sup> The Peruzzi villa has just been bought by Mr. Browning.

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time of our third Edward, and now, alas ! in the hands of creditors, as is the case with so many of the old family properties in this country. It was the first anniversary of the death of the old Marchesa, and a memorial service had been held there that morning, so that the little chapel was full of lovely wreaths of fresh flowers, and streamers of black and gold ribbons were hung against its walls. We were just comfortably warm rolled up in fur cloaks, on the eighth of May, and the sky was so full of heavy black clouds that the effect over the neighbouring hills was to recall those of the north of Scotland. But everywhere were plantings of the pale blue iris so largely grown in Tuscany for the sake of its root (the orris root of commerce), and every cypress tree was wreathed with white or yellow Banksia roses. I began to count how many vacant cypresses, so to say, I could muster, and to wonder why they had not been clothed with Banksias long ere now. We returned by Bagno a' Ripoli, the district so famous for its cherry orchards, but the flowering of these is quite over for this season.

The recent gales and storms have done great damage to the fruit crops which promised so well. Our own court-yard is strewn with cherry stalks. Indeed, one drawback of living under pergolas of wistaria and Banksia roses, and underneath Judas trees, is the continual sweeping and cleaning the constant fall of blossom involves. A ground-work of Judas petals has a lovely effect where newly fallen, but all the same it takes time and labour from the gardener. The day following this trip, and in the same ungenial weather,

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we attended a huge social gathering where the wholesale waste and destruction of flowers was quite painful, ropes of roses being hung about, and many thousands of flowers must have been employed. Six men had been at work upon these decorations during the previous night. Had large palms and foliage plants been placed in the vacant spaces in the reception-rooms, and one-fourth of the flowers employed been tastefully arranged in tall glasses and old majolica vases, the effect would have been much better.

Having seen more of my fellow-creatures in the last fortnight than I had during the last six months, I felt entitled to an off afternoon for my own private enjoyment, and turned into the beautiful old garden formerly belonging to the Convent of Santa Croce, and now farmed out to a nursery gardener. There is a beautiful view from it of the back of the church, which makes a charming point for a sketch. I found in this garden a rose quite new to me, the buds very small, and of a brilliant orange colour, but, when fully open, going off into a four-petalled single rose of a pale pink, and of no particular character or beauty. It was brought from England a few years ago, and given to this nurseryman, who has propagated it very successfully. He also has a beautiful white Bengalese rose.

I turned into the cloisters, not having seen the Pazzi chapel, with its beautiful Della Robbia medallions, since its restoration was completed. These cloisters are now tastefully planted with shrubs, and have a quite cared-for look. Close by, in the Corso dei

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Tintori, is the old *palazzo* of the Doni family—Raphael's friends,—and a tablet in the inner wall of the Cortile records his visit to them in the year 1504. A legend is inscribed on the opposite side of this wall

*Amici—Nemici  
Parenti—Serpenti  
Cugini—Assassini  
Fratelli—Coltelli.*

As the *custode* said with a smile, there were those who agreed with these definitions, and those who differed from them. They are truly Tuscan.

A half-wild cat has for some time haunted our garden. For weeks past I have told Eugenio I was certain she had deposited her family in the *cantina* (cellar) beneath the stanzone, where all the gardener's stock of pots, stakes, mould, etc., is kept. Eugenio scouted this idea, and swore that not once this spring had he heard the faintest squeak of kitten existence. But to-day, being Sunday, it fell to the cook, in his absence, to house the doves at sunset, and Irma came with the pleasing intelligence that the cat and her family had ascended the stairs, and were having a high old time in the stanzone,—only seven of them. The reception Eugenio met with on his return may be imagined, and the order was passed for a Herodian slaughter of the innocents, for which I was truly sorry, but seven wild young cats this spring would probably mean fifty by next year.

*May 16.* To-day, for the first time in all the years of our sojourn in Tuscany, I have seen a Medanilla. I

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do not know why this most decorative pink-tasselled beauty is not grown here; neither are Eucharis lilies, so indispensable in English forcing-houses; no cut flowers last so long as these lovely lilies, for decorating either rooms or person.

This is the season for enjoying gardens, rather than for writing about them, and, indeed, the whole country is one vast garden: over every grey stone wall hedges of pink China roses are nodding their heads in the summer breeze, and every contadino's field has its patch of pale blue irises.

During these last few days I have paid visits to a good many friendly gardens, differing widely in character from each other, but with much to admire in each. One, on a hill-top, a newly planted domain, free from the curse of old tree roots, with virgin soil and abundance of water, its owner resident here for only two brief sojourns in the year, and, therefore, able to maintain *rapporti* with her English garden at home and keep *au courant* with the newest roses, the latest English gardening crazes, and desirable plantings generally. Another, inhabited by its tenants for a still shorter period, of purely Italian type,—magnificent avenues of stately cypress trees, long stretches of grass, terraces with enchanting views, old stone benches, and very few flowers other than Banksia roses trailing all over the place—a garden of the kind that perhaps affords the maximum of enjoyment with the minimum of trouble. Two others, in a different part of the country, both now belonging to foreign residents, and, although worked on the *mezzeria* sys-

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tem, kept in excellent order. One of these is associated with the memory of Baccio Bandinelli, the sculptor; the other was the old home of Walter Savage Landor, and has only recently passed out of the possession of his descendants. The views from both these places are enchanting, and in the latter it is easily seen that English taste dictated its early plantings of trees and shrubs; the birds sing riotously among the old ilex and cypress trees, and the perfume of the trim box hedges in the warm air is delicious. A neighbouring domain, which had its gardening foundations laid by a friend of my own, is now in the possession of garden lovers with both taste and wealth, and bids fair to become, under the management of a very successful head gardener, one of the loveliest places in Tuscany.

A great collector of old French faience used to claim for the bric-à-brac collecting taste the great merit that visiting large collections, public or private, never sends you home dissatisfied with your own possessions. I am not sure that that holds good in the matter of gardens; the want of adequate space in which to work out ideas, more worlds to conquer, in short, is very hard to bear, and "earth hunger" acquires a keener edge when one sees so many beautiful, wide terrace walks, and sloping lawns, and shady paths, winding among groves of forest trees — these last in their right place, and not, as in my poor little domain, making their roots felt all over the ground.

But it would be hard to quarrel with one's own garden just at this moment, when it literally rains roses:

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they are finer this season than in any previous year; the Maréchals are splendid, and when I open my *persiani* (shutters) of a morning, it is to meet the gaze of the numberless blooms of Niphетос, purest and most refined of tea-roses, which have turned their heads towards my bedroom windows. The upper espalier is a golden sheet of Fortune's yellow, the lower one, that screens off the rose beds, is covered with the stately Gloire de Lorraine; the Banksias on the stan-zone roof have been grafted with many choice teas, while down in the garden, on every old stump, those self-assertive ladies, Marie Henriette and Olga de Würtemburg, are raising their showy heads. The Laurette Messimys, on the cross-fence, are just beginning to bloom, and the red rose hedge only waits a few more warm days before breaking into a mass of crimson.

In the wild border, under the summer salotto, all the Rugosa, and other hardy varieties planted last autumn, are doing well, and Crimson Rambler is climbing in his usual rampant fashion. Here are also handsome double wallflowers and delicate columbines, and the old pittosporum tree is wreathed with the first red honeysuckle. To-day we have budded a number of new rose grafts; the advantage of doing this now is, that if they fail, one has a second chance to repeat the operation in September.

The earliest of the Azalea mollis, of tender tints, are passing by, but lovely flame-coloured ones in the same bed succeed them and our few rhododendrons are just coming into flower. The weather is getting perceptibly warmer, and soon the sun will be scorch-

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ing; but, as yet, a very chilly wind prevails, which has the further effect of withering the flowers, and dries up the ground almost more than sun-heat would do. To-day, Ascension, all the lower orders in Florence betake themselves to the Cascine to catch *grilli* (crickets) which are hawked about the streets in tiny cages. There is a great Agricultural Congress in Florence this week, and a flower show at the Horticultural Gardens in connection with it.

*May 23.* The fireflies have arrived; so have the mosquitoes, but as yet the latter are but a feeble folk. The fields are full of wild gladioli that grow among the corn; a little girl brought us a great sheaf of these a few days ago which are most effective in a large old majolica pot.

The annual saturnalia of taking up and putting away the heavy winter carpets and curtains have commenced, and the cool summer mattings are so grateful to eye and touch.

The flower show was no great affair as to plants; Eugenio returned from it in a most self-satisfied frame of mind, declaring that our roses were far superior to anything he had seen there. He has been sent lately with grafts of roses to several neighbouring gardens, and as I see a distinct tendency to magnify the extent of his own labours as compared with those of others, I mean to avoid giving occasion for these comparisons in future.

But if the horticultural part of the show was somewhat poor, the pigeons, poultry, peacocks, Japanese pheasants, etc., were bewitching. I lost my heart to the

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hooded pigeons,—fawn, pure white, and black and white; there was a most beautiful pure white peacock, too, whose right place I felt would be on our grass walk, but probably there would not be much left of the garden if he took up his abode in it.

It seems that the age of miracles is not yet past, for my enemy, the villa head-gardener, has not only volunteered us a place in which to deposit our house and garden *spazzatura* (sweepings), much more convenient than that we have hitherto occupied, but has announced that at *Ognissanti*, this autumn, there is to be another grand thinning out of the shrubbery, this time on the side of our grass walk! It appears that this was to have been done two months ago, when the park side was cleared out, but time failed them, so it was left for next November. I had had views of not encountering the chances of such another Tuscan winter as the last, but this prospect opens up a vista of the possibility of "openings" being found to which our row of fine oleanders might be transferred from their present station. Not only would they have a splendid effect at the back of our existing shrub-border, giving to its low tones of white and green just the touches of colour that would make it perfect, but the whole long border which they now occupy would be left quite free for the innumerable things for which I am always longing, but for which at present there is not an inch of room. I gloat over this possibility, and on confiding it to Eugenio he also received it with effusion; but then, as he dolefully remarked, "It does not do to *confidarsi* (trust) in such *gente* (gentry) as these others."

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Of the truth of this observation I have had only too many proofs ; still, by dint of pulling a variety of strings, the hour and the axe may arrive. Meantime the garden is beautiful beyond words : never has it looked so *English* as this year, and it is not only quantity but quality that so distinguishes it. The border roses make *furore*, and for all the basketfuls and bunches that are distributed to friends, you never would know, as Eugenio proudly says, that one had been picked. I think he now grasps the full value of the three precepts I have been dinging into him, to prune back and cut out all dead and old wood, to feed liberally, and to disbud. The latter is totally foreign to Tuscan practice. But it is not the roses only, *everything* is flowering well, the herbaceous peonies are as fine as were their tree predecessors ; the Spanish irises, new and old, are a great show, and some fine rhododendrons take the place of the Azalea *mollis*. Among these the rhododendron called "Purity" is a mass of fine trusses of flowers.

The weather is magnificent and almost disposes one to forget and forgive the cruel winter through which we have passed,—a cool, fresh breeze in the early morning, and a slight mist through which the dark cypresses look their loveliest, and indoors in shady rooms a temperature of about seventy degrees. In the garden, the sun is of course very hot, as I found when pottering about, removing withered roses, and capturing the beautiful green beetles that one is grieved to destroy, but it is a choice between that and having all the hearts of the roses eaten out.

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I spent, or mis-spent, according to the point of view, six hours one day in arranging a feast of roses in the drawing-room. The Junior Partner was on the tramp, so I was single handed, and I requested the *famiglia* to dine at their usual hour and not to bother me about lunch until I intimated my readiness for sustenance.

Arranging some hundreds of roses is a solemnity. First they have to be separated into sorts and kinds, and then a further division of lengths must be made. Then you must make your choice of colours, according to what you have,—cut your coat according to your cloth, as it were.

I flattered myself that in this instance the result was good. On the top of the fire-place, which is covered with old brocade, was a kind of *bal blanc*,—tall glasses of Gloire de Lorraine and Camelliana behind, Niphетос in front, arranged in twos and threes, and even single extra specimens,—all in green glasses. A small table, draped with a beautiful piece of old white Persian embroidery, had for a background an iridescent Moorish jar filled with bronze and smoky iris flowers with their own leaves; in front of this were various pieces of old Leeds ware, filled with buds of “William Allen Richardson”; the moss roses filled an old brass bowl of Persian workmanship; darkest hybrid perpetuals were in green glass bowls; tall peonies stood up against a piece of Point d’Hongrois that forms a background to an Italian “stipo” of pearwood inlaid with ivory; La Frances, Augustine Guinois-saus, Ideala, all kept carefully by themselves. By four o’clock I began to realize that it was a long time since

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the seven-thirty A.M. tea and toast; had the Junior Partner been at home this irregularity would never have been permitted!

I commend to the attention of dinner-table decorators "Laurette Messimy," both in the bud and in full bloom, arranged in old Leeds vases and in old Venetian glasses; the result is superb.

*May 26.* There is a very pretty custom here of the blessing of the flowers on San Zanobi's day, twenty-fifth of May. I had never seen this, and drove into Florence to the duomo,—the steps were crowded with flower-sellers and vendors of rosaries, and little cards with the legend of San Zanobi; and the cry never ceased, "Un soldo per San Zanobi." A space in the nave of the duomo was railed off; inside this were rows of priests and acolytes; the silver bust of the saint was passed round, and the contadini handed over their bunches of flowers, rosaries, and cards to the *sacerdoti*, who rapidly passed them for a moment across the face of the saint, and then returned them to their owners.

Since six o'clock in the morning the duomo had been thronged with contadini, and at eleven o'clock they still kept pouring in; groups of the Franciscan sisters of the Stigmata, in their picturesque brown skirts and cloaks, with large flopping yellow hats, were kneeling on the pavement, and they and the black and white-robed Dominican sisters gave additional effect to the scene.

When I left the church my friends the flower-sellers came crowding around me, but I had taken down a basketful of our choicest roses, not, indeed, to offer

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to the saint, but to confer a blessing on some sick babies, for whose sake a "good Christian heretic," to put it in an Irish way, has made her home in one of the lowest parts of the town, where she spends, not only her income, but her time and strength and thoughts in nursing such of these poor children as have gone through surgical operations, and require care and feeding up. I had left the basket in the carriage when I entered the duomo, and now held it up to the men, who were full of admiration, and much interested when they heard its destination.

Just now the white acacia trees are flowering abundantly through the whole countryside; a villa near us has its long avenue planted entirely with these beautiful trees, with which I first made acquaintance at Ravenna, more than thirty years ago. There is a pale pink variety of this tree, of which I only know one example here, and I have not yet succeeded in learning its name. It is even more beautiful than the white one. Our own old sheltering acacia tree has recovered in a marvellous way, thanks to the care bestowed upon it last autumn in cutting out the decayed branches.

The most beautiful object in the garden this week has been the Lagerstroemia, which is now completely wreathed with the small white cluster rose, "L'Americano"; this rose is one mass of flowers, in small clusters, very sweet-scented, and a great attraction to the bees. Some one said the other day that it was a first cousin of the rose pimpnel, but a botanical friend has taken a piece of it to Kew to see if they have it there; if so, we will get the right name. The effect of

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this rose-wreathed tree at a little distance is that of a pear tree in full blossom. Now the little pink China multiflora on the *berceau* and against the cherry tree is just coming into flower.

In spite of all the lovely fruit blossom of the early spring, the storms have been so disastrous that cherries will be a short crop in this part of the world. I don't believe there are fifty left on our own tree.

The contadini are cutting the hay in the big park, and the perfume is delicious. But the scent that to-day dominates every other, even that of the spicy clove pinks, is the honeysuckle; wherever one turns in the garden little whiffs of it greet one, for we planted it against every available tree-trunk. This year the garden has become a veritable paradise, and is lifted forever beyond any ignominious suspicion of the suburban. Somehow, and just all of a sudden, as it were, every tree and shrub and plant has acquired the look of having always grown there, and not that of having been planted.

The moonlight nights are superb, so fresh as to be quite exhilarating, and we sit out watching the fireflies darting about till ten o'clock. There is a curious weather phenomenon I have never known till now: every night, as the moon sinks, a heavy white mist rises, and remains till about ten A.M. It keeps the garden fresh and green, but is most adverse both to the ripening grain and to the vines, to which it brings the dreaded Peronospera disease, and the little blight on some of our roses is no doubt caused by it. Altogether the latter part of this month has been quite ideal.

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June 1. The country, which for several days past has stood at "attention" on the platform of expectation, was to-day informed, by the firing of guns, that the Quirinal babe had arrived; of course there was an inevitable sense of disappointment that it is a daughter, and not the eagerly desired male heir to the throne. Let us hope that he also will appear in due course. The little princess and the summer heat have arrived simultaneously, and already the *forestieri* are scattering. If the newspaper reports are to be depended upon, those who are returning to British shores will find a temperature quite as high as, and much more trying than, the dry heat of Tuscany.

During the next ten days there will be nothing but farewell visits from departing friends. In this country there are not the smallest beginnings of such tourist arrangements as abound in England for the convenience of the traveller. To offer inducements to people to move about is an idea that has not as yet penetrated the brain of railway managers, rather is there every possible annoyance, inconvenience, and imposition placed in the path of the would-be traveller. About four years ago, the happy idea struck the *governo* of imposing a tax on a kind of sliding scale on certain quick trains, and according to the distance travelled.

The Milanese paper, the *Corriere della Sera*, drew attention, in October, 1898, to the results of this system, which it very pertinently designated as being specially adapted to encourage cheating of all kinds. That autumn we ourselves were overcharged on tickets between Florence and Turin, as I discovered *en route*,

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and the authorities, both at Genoa and Turin, admitted the fact, left me in possession of the tickets, and advised applying to the administration on the subject. After writing repeatedly, I took the precaution to register my letter, and the final answer was to the effect that, *as there was no surplus in the Florence bureau on the day in question, I must have made a mistake!*

There is a refreshing simplicity about this reply, especially as I had returned our tickets in my letter of complaint and the amount paid was stamped upon them! Last autumn a friend ran down from Geneva to spend ten days with us. On her departure I accompanied her to the Florence station and registered her luggage back to Geneva; the sum demanded was rather more than double what she had paid in coming. I appealed to the head of the luggage department, uselessly; was assured there must have been a mistake at Geneva. But my friend had taken her return tickets through a railway agency, and they succeeded, from the Swiss end, in making the Tuscan officials disgorge. Another English friend had precisely the same experience about the same date, a double charge for the same amount of luggage on the return journey. In his case there was no successful redress.

We always warn tourist friends against the snare of return tickets or of any kind of circular-tour arrangements; the small money-saving so effected is not worth the annoyance of all sorts of restrictions as to which trains these enable you to travel by; it is far better to be left entirely free to alter plans *en route*, and book from day to day by what route and train suits you.

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The worst result of such a late spring as this is, that things that were due to flower in April are only now coming out,—notably petunias, sweet-peas, and Shirley poppies,—and they are consequently burnt up by the scorching sun. Sweet-peas gathered one day are faded the next. But notwithstanding our southwest aspect we are still green and fresh, while on the north border the climbing “Captain Christys” are superb.

*June 5.* Thunder has been grumbling and growling round us, and last night nature gave us an astonishing exhibition of fireworks. Ongoing out to the garden after dinner we noticed heavy banks of clouds of a very peculiar shape, away in the Mugello, beyond Monte Morello; presently lightning began to flash and play among these, and continued for about two hours in an extraordinary way; the effect was as if serpentine figures were being hurled about. The storm there must have been tremendous, and the effect here this morning is felt in a considerably lowered temperature and a peculiar clearness of atmosphere, indicating that another storm is impending.

Rain will be more than welcome, as the sun heat in the last few days has considerably damaged our flowers, and a good downpour would freshen us up.

The Azorre and the Tecoma are both putting out fresh shoots, which is cheering, but it will be quite two years before the vegetation of the former arrives at the development it had attained last autumn.

The Crimson Rambler is in flower, and the plants of *Yucca gloriosa* beside it are sending up great spikes of blossom.

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This morning Eugenio paid predatory visits to various of his brethren, and returned laden with a beautiful provision of cuttings of all sorts and kinds. The season has now arrived when one notices the extraordinary hush that comes over all creation, brute and human, between the hours of twelve and four P.M.; not a sound is heard, not a creature stirring, and even the turtle-doves croon less frequently than during the night. In the evenings, the afterglow of the sunsets recalls the colouring of Egyptian skies; there is the same faint green tint, melting into pale lemon, and then a fiery crimson belt below.

Although the air is cool and breezy, and the temperature in our darkened rooms is only seventy-five degrees Fahrenheit, out in the garden during these last few days the sun has simply frizzled up the red-rose hedge, and the pink Bengalese roses, the two varieties that at this season form our *pièce de résistance* for the dinner table. The flowering of everything is most *sotto sopra* (that expressive Italian equivalent for upside down), and the oleanders are flowering three weeks before their time.

We have this year had a "novelty" in foxgloves, the long flowering-spike, terminating in a large *round* flower. I don't admire this innovation at all: it is as if a large disc were placed on the apex of a graceful spire. The honeysuckle, being mostly in shady places, still holds its own, but now all over the country the odour of the "*Rhynchospermum jasminoides*" is wafted through the air; it is delicious, and the flower is lovely to look at as well.

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All the azaleas and rhododendrons must be removed as soon as possible into their shady summer quarters, and for this flitting operation assistance has to be called in. The frames have also to be stored for the summer in the empty stanzone, as the blazing sun cracks the wood, and having had these all thoroughly repaired last autumn, we want to preserve them as well as may be.

*June 7.* The heat is beyond bearing. This morning the thermometer in the court-yard stood at one hundred and ten degrees Fahrenheit, and when the effect is to make one feel as if every bone and joint were being put out of place life becomes a *soffranza*. The natives feel the heat quite as much as we do, and are flying in every direction in search of a cooler climate. Such a temperature in June is quite unusual, and would be thought excessive even in July and August, when the sun has entered "Leone." Blessed are they who can take an afternoon siesta, a thing I never could achieve, even in the Philippines, seven degrees from the line. The only way not to feel the heat is to be frantically busy, but thunder heat paralyses one's faculties, and it is so difficult to occupy one's self in the darkened rooms during the long afternoon hours.

It is just twelve months since this district rejoiced in the definite assurance that at last it was to be provided with a proper water-supply. Not, indeed, on the extensive scale proposed some time back, of bringing water down from Garfagnana; that scheme has long since been relegated to municipal oblivion. But even the humbler alternative of bringing it from Cercina

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was hailed with joy, and as the contractor delivered great stacks of pipes at the gate of every house along the road down which the water was to pass, the belief was general that at last our water supply was not to be, as heretofore, wholly derived from the heavens above. One English lady, with this prospect in view, took a large villa in this neighbourhood, and opened it as a convalescent home. The summer passed, the autumn went by, the pipes lay on the ground, nothing was done! People in Tuscany never do expect anything to be done in which the *municipio* is concerned. Whispers began to get about of a dispute between the *concessionario* and the contractor; we were also informed that messieurs the *assessori* were all taking their holiday by sea or mountain side; perhaps, when they returned, we should see; "Chi sa?" and so forth and so forth. The *assessori* returned, the pipes were removed, nothing was done, and for another year the wretched peasantry have been pumping up a fluid which the able and energetic young doctor of this Commune has declared to be highly *malsano*, if not, indeed, *infettivo*. Now it is again whispered that quarrels have been adjusted, and that before this month is out the work will be begun. "Chi sa?" we say again, being by this time well accustomed to the ways of the Tuscan *municipio*, which, like those of Providence, are past finding out. Meantime, at least once a week the good doctor descends at the door of the Palazzo Vecchio, flask in hand, to display the many curious and interesting specimens of foreign bodies which his patients have to swallow in this "pure element."

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I was speaking of this matter the other day to a very intelligent employer of labour here, a Piedmontese. He shook his head and said that such delays would have been impossible in the north, but that here in Tuscany there was no public spirit,—nothing but wretched little jealousies, petty spites and intrigues, in the midst of which the public weal was wholly lost sight of.

Jack received me this morning in the garden for the first "al fresco" breakfast of the season, affable as usual, but greatly puzzled at not having been summoned to follow the breakfast tray upstairs, and his face wore an anxious and pitiful expression, as much as to say he hoped I didn't imagine *he* had had his repast, whatever *I* might have done. A dog would have remembered quite well that we were only taking up the thread of last summer's customs.

The English papers are in a most self-satisfied mood. Our weeklies go the round of a good many neighbouring villas, and I overheard one "Constant Reader" make a sarcastic allusion to the "omni-science" of the *Spectator*, while another candidly avers that the best part of *Country Life* is to be found in the wholesale lies used by the house agents to describe the desirable properties of which their owners seem so anxious to rid themselves. And the editors of popular gardening papers appear to have worked themselves into the belief that they have, if not *created*, at least *discovered*, Kew. It has been heard of occasionally before their time, and may be so again! Their paeans of satisfaction remind me of the time (a generation

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ago) when my English home and garden were in an old-world corner, within a stone's throw of the Thames. A north-country cousin, who had come up to town to represent his native Mid-Lothian in the "House," was greatly delighted with the social amenities and the beauty of "the river," as its devotees so fondly call it, and, apparently under the belief that he had made a surprising discovery, he asked us one day if we ever went on "the river"! It was explained to him that such was our use and wont, that, in fact, we never did anything *but* go on "the river"; but he remained convinced that he and his family — "men, women, and Hervey's" — had discovered the sources of the Thames.

Summer is coming on apace; going out of the blinding sunshine into the cool dark churches, you find every altar decked with fragrant bunches of madonna lilies. In nothing has the advance of modern civilization made so great an improvement in this country as in the care now bestowed on the maintenance of the churches. I can remember the time when it was not possible for a lady to let her dress touch their floors, so indescribably filthy were they; now it is very rare indeed to find one that is not perfectly clean. In the last visit we paid to Ravenna, the contrast between the condition of the churches as they are to-day and as I first knew them thirty-five years ago, struck me very much. On this last occasion, a new archbishop had been appointed, and we were fortunate enough to come in, not only for the ceremonies attending his installation, but also for the turning out of

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the sacristy previous to his entry, in order that an inventory might be furnished of all the sacred "properties," Madonna's robes, priestly vestments, etc. It was a wonderful sight and I doubt the green-room of any theatre coming up to it in the nondescript variety of its possessions!

The tourists have fled, and the *antiquarii* are sitting down, dejected in spirit and reduced in price, to reckon up their winter gains. As a rule they know little about their wares, the price of which is regulated more by what they themselves have paid for them than by any idea of their intrinsic value. These gentry would not respect you if you did not bargain with them, and a young friend of mine who patronised them largely, one morning received a franc back from a dealer with the remark, that on that particular occasion she had forgotten to "take anything off him"! If you wish to reflect a little before purchasing, the time-honoured formula is, after ascertaining the price of the article, to say that you will let your (imaginary) friend know, and that he or she will pass if it suits them. The same young friend being about to remove to her native Scotland, was warned by a younger member of the family that she would some day be found informing the butcher that she would mention the price of his legs of mutton to her friend. Indeed I once found myself saying to an astonished salesman in Vere Street, "Don't you think you could make this a little less"? The poor man evidently thought he had to deal with a wandering lunatic, and his face of consternation recalled me to British respectability and fixity of price.

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*June 23.* Nature has favoured us with another of the phenomenal "samples of weather," of which we have already seen so many this year.

Just as we were all at the last gasp from the prolonged tension of three weeks of thundery heat, a terrific storm broke on the fifteenth; the wind rose to a gale, the trees swayed and creaked, rain fell in torrents, lashing up against the windows. The poor old iron cupola of the *berceau*, loosened from the rotten structure which supported it, turned completely over on its side, and hung suspended in mid-air, a most alarming object. I had for months past been warning the powers that be, that some catastrophe might be looked for if it were not removed, and we have been thankful to see it safely landed on terra-firma. Some temporary supports for the creepers have been fixed up, but I hope that in the autumn the heart of the "*Commendatore*" will be moved to re-instate it on a new and solid basis. The tempestuous weather has lasted for a week. To hear of fires in England and of snow in Scotland in June provokes no surprise, but to see the Carrara peaks covered with fresh snow in the third week of June is something outside the experience of the "*oldest inhabitant*." Welcome as the rain was, so sudden a drop in temperature led to a general dislocation of bones and balances, and no one was sorry when we returned to more normal conditions.

*June 26.* "*San Giovanni*," that greatest of all Tuscan festivals, has come and gone. The day is a kind of high-water mark, dividing the late spring from early summer. I drove into Florence in the early morn-

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ing, and found the whole place astir: Ghiberti's great doors were thrown open and, before both baptistery and duomo, *carabinieri* and *guardie* in gala uniforms were drawn up, awaiting the arrival of the *Syndic* and the *assessori* of the *municipio*, who on this national festival are bound to attend mass in both churches. The baptistery even at that early hour was so full it was hardly possible to force one's way through the crowd. Leaving the *Municipio* to its devotions, I went on to take a medicated bath. The director of the baths received me with the query, did I not think it *vergogna* (shame) to take a bath on "San Giovanni"? I replied that, on the contrary, it appeared to me I could not better honour the Baptist than by the practice of immersion on his *festa*. In the evening Brunelleschi's dome and the tower of the *Palazzo Vecchio* were beautifully illuminated, and a grand display of fireworks gratified crowds of people who filled the streets. Perhaps the prettiest feature of the whole display was the swift rushing little boats that sped up and down the *Arno*. By ten-thirty all was over, and the orderly Tuscan crowd retired to its slumbers after a happy holiday. The streets of Florence are never seen to greater advantage than in these first weeks of early summer. The beggars have retired for the season and are enjoying their own *villeggiatura* either in sea-bathing at *Viareggio*, or in pestering the patients at *Monte-Catini*.

There is a propriety and suitability about the summer toilettes of the Tuscan middle-class that is in great contrast to the tawdry appearance of the same

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class in England. In winter, Tuscan townswomen are apt to have a bedizened look, from the appalling quantity of feathers stuck in their head-gear. I do not know the origin of this wearing of feathers, but it is a kind of symbol of substantial well-being, like the Chinaman's teapot, to which he always refers when formulating matrimonial proposals: "silver tea-pot have got." But in summer nothing can be more charming than their tasteful, well-cut dresses; labour is cheap, and a dress recalling last year's fashion is never seen: all is new and fresh, and the beauty and variety of hats, made of the exquisite Tuscan straw-work, would astonish a Paris milliner.

In the early morning the *popolani* are hurrying to their various occupations, the little carts of *bibite* (drinks), hung with strings of fresh lemon and wreathed with green, are being wheeled into their different stations. The fruiterers' shops are resplendent with colour, great baskets of cherries are piled up,—the small, pale amber Kentish "white hearts"; or their equivalent, the transparent scarlet "Marenne,"—these for preserving; and, best of all, the big crimson Pistoia cherries, so dark in colour as to be almost black and so large that they give the lie to the popular proverb of not furnishing two bites.

Gardenia flowers mounted for the button-holes of young Tuscan dandies are hawked about the streets on a kind of moss cushion, and at every corner little whiffs of lavender are wafted from the deftly arranged packets of its fragrant flowers, ready to be placed in linen cupboards.

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In town and country alike the perfume of the lime-blossom scents the warm air, and in the late afternoons, when the streets have been well watered and a fresh breeze is blowing, the pavements outside the cafés are crowded with the well-to-do classes enjoying their ice or *sirop* while listening to an excellent band of music. It almost seems as if the people experienced a sense of relief, and were saying: "The Inglesi are gone. Italy for the Italians."

The country is looking its loveliest: as yet the full rich summer green, freshened up by the recent rains, shows no sign of flagging from the heat; the hedge-rows are full of white rock-cistus, and the Magnolia *grandiflora* trees are covered with their waxy blossoms, contrasting finely with pale pink oleanders. It is a beautiful moment throughout the land, and although there are now few flowers in our garden the avenue is gay with St. John's Wort, and the effect of the different shades of green is exquisite. We have many variegated plants: the Japanese honeysuckle wreaths its golden trails among the young shoots of the wistaria; the reddish seed of the tamarisk gives another tint; the new red shoots of the tea-roses are already covered with the buds of their second flowering; the many shades of green of the shrubs, from pale to dark, all combine to yield an effect almost equal to the spring flowering. The seed-pods of the Judas tree are this year so abundant and so varied in shade, that they make a flush of pink throughout the tree, suggestive of its early blossoms.

The birds are still singing as if spring were only

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just beginning ; fat blackbirds hop about the grass walk and in the fir plantation behind the house, without fear or favour, and the nightingale's long-drawn note gives no indication of coming to an end.

The Absentee begins to sound his joyful note of possible "long leave" next spring. This opens a vista of Joachim quartets, Richter concerts, Temple flower-shows and happy days at Kew, which will be the temporary substitutes for the roses and the nightingales of my Tuscan garden. It is just a year since I began this record of its joys and sorrows, failures and successes. It is a very idyllic life in all that pertains to nature, that great Madonna consolatrice, with a large infusion of humdrum jog-trot and old fogyism, and an interest in the iniquities of the neighbour worthy of the inhabitants of Cranford. I might add how incredible is the difficulty, when living in Tuscany, of getting any explanation of little out-of-the-way bits of "local colour" of which you desire to know the reason. There are no Italian "Notes and Queries," nor Isaac Taylors to explain the connection between "Words and Places." For instance, I have been quite unable to discover the reason of the pawnbrokers' shops in this part of Tuscany being garnished, so to say, with little pots of rue. All through Tuscany rue is considered very unlucky, and a scarlet thread is always tied round the plant in order to keep off the "evil eye"; scarlet, more than any other colour, being supposed to be efficacious for this purpose. Indeed, I have heard of lambs' tails being decorated with a red ribbon ! Imagine the face of an

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Eskdale shepherd if he saw the tails of his yearlings tied up with red ribbons ! But the connection of rue, the "Herb o' Grace," with pawnbrokers' shops, remains as great a mystery as the eating of figs on San Pietro, now so close at hand. What that apostle had to do with green figs no one seems to know ; only, that so to commemorate him is the bounden duty of all good *Cristiani*.

The invariable answer to any questions on such points is, that it is of *uso antichissimo* ; this is equivalent to the Chinaman's "olo custom."

When visiting in England I have to bear, with what meekness I can command, the reproach of not being up to date, and a total lack of the spirit of modernity. Once, indeed, about six years ago, arriving "in town" in the height of a "boom" in South African shares, I had to confess my ignorance of the existence of such a place as Johannisberg. Alas ! Enough has been heard since then of that part of the world, to penetrate even Tuscan solitudes.

But what knowledge of the many windings of "modernity," comprising, as it does, spiritualistic "séances,"—telepathy,—new woman,—Christian Science,—can be expected from people living in the fourteenth century ? Faculties are limited, and when I find myself more than ordinarily ignorant, there is consolation in the recollection that J. Addington Symonds has confessed that there was a time, even in his Oxford days, when he had never heard the name of Clough !

Like other phases of "back-water" existence, this

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modern fourteenth century Tuscan life has its defects and its drawbacks.

When, as not infrequently happens, the secretary and I do not see eye to eye in the matter of necessary structural repairs and the pruning, or, as he terms it, the "extirpating" of shrubs; and when, in this divergence of opinion, he is more than usually "Teutonic," we will say, in the expression of his views, so that I am, *per forza*, driven back on my almost forgotten "offensively English manner," as Sir Edmund Malet terms that special product; when, on the other hand, that arch-fiend, the old villa gardener, is so sleek and smooth and smiling, so truly Italian, that we instinctively feel assured that he is planning some extra double-distilled villainy; when his wife's cocks and hens make a daily stalking-ground of our grass walk, and the cry has to be raised "Polli di Caterina!" perhaps only to find that these particular hens are the "Polli di Assunta," the old contadina; when Eugenio is more than usually oblivious of the obligations of the ninth commandment; when the heavens are as brass, and the poor garden is burnt to a cinder; and when all these woes are accentuated by the icy blast of the tramontana, or the grip of the thunder on your nervous system, then it is good to remember that, by the grace and favour of a kind old landlord, you have dwelt for fifteen years amid surroundings in which the "Great White Queen" desired to sojourn, but to which she could not attain.

Some day, in the inevitable "changes and chances of this mortal life," a great lesson in detachment

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will have to be learnt; the trunks will be packed, the omnibus ordered, adieu will be said to the beloved cypress trees and the niphетос roses, and the gates will close for the last time upon our Tuscan home and garden.

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Three Months' Trial Subscription, \$1.00

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